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Modern discipleship and what it means

MODERN DISCIPLESHIP AND WHAT IT MEANS

MODERN DISCIPLESHIP AND WHAT IT MEANS

BY

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PREFACE TO NEW AND REVISED EDITION

This book was first published in 1911. After the fourth edition, the Student Movement suggested that the opportunity might be taken to give the book a thorough revision, especially as it was written in the now remote pre-war days. This suggestion I have gladly acted upon. I have not attempted to write the book all over again, a course which might have impaired what of value it originally had. But I have re-written parts of it, and revised all of it, removing anything obviously out of date, correcting inaccuracies and, to a slight extent, filling in omissions. I have had some hesitation about Chapter IX, but I have retained it, after careful revision, and after getting it "passed" by a friend who is an eminent scientist. In the third section of that chapter, and in Chapter V, I have not attempted to deal with the relation of Christian experience to the new psychology, as that work is being adequately performed by several religious writers to-day, with far better equipment for the task than I could claim. I have merely, in that connection, said some things which in my judgment are still valid, and still need saying.

I wrote the book in the first instance, and I re-issue it now, because there seem to me so many Christians, or semi-Christians, in the Church and

outside it, who appear to be curiously unaware of the amazing richness of their religion, in the grandeur of its goal, the width of its outlook, the closeness of its relation to common life, and the strength of its appeal to all the powers of body and mind which man possesses. From letters received, and from other evidence, it seems that this book, inadequate as it is, has helped some to get a new insight into the limitless possibilities of personal Christianity. I humbly trust that as the book goes forth again it may continue to render such service. Its main theme is the Christian's "inner life," and the illuminating experience of personal contact with God in Christ. The tremendous practical consequences, personal and social, of such spiritual re-birth I have endeavoured to trace in a sequel, published in 1922, called *Every-day Religion*. The two books together constitute an attempt to describe in ordinary language something of what Christian discipleship involves for the ordinary man and woman of to-day.

EDWARD S. WOODS.

Cambridge,
October 1923.

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ὁ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει τὴν ζωὴν

CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF FAITH

CHAPTER I

THE MEANING OF FAITH

"Think not the faith by which the just shall live
Is a dead creed, a map correct of heaven
Far less a feeling fond and fugitive,
A thoughtless gift, withdrawn as soon as given.
It is an affirmation and an act
That bids eternal truth be present fact."

HARTLEY COLERIDGE.

WHAT is a Christian? It sounds a simple question. It ought not to be difficult to answer, seeing that a Christian has been a common sight in the world for nineteen centuries. Yet the fact remains that large numbers of people, who are cultured and even religious, have the haziest idea of what is really involved in being a Christian. The only possible outward test of a Christian can be described in one word, Christ-likeness. If a man by his blamelessness, his humility, his consistent unselfishness, reminds us of Christ, we may be fairly sure that he is a Christian. But even then we have not discovered *why* he is Christ-like; if we can find this out, we shall at the same time find out what it really means to be a Christian.

Definitions are always difficult and often unsatisfactory. The rare and elemental things, like light

and electricity and gravitation, are always hard to define and explain, while easy to see or feel. However, by attempting one in this instance, we may at least clear the ground and find a starting-point for further investigation. We might then define a Christian in some such terms as these: A man who, through Christ, has entered into and is living in a conscious personal relationship with God, and whose manner of life is determined by this relationship. Or, to put it somewhat differently, in the words of a thoughtful German writer, "personal Christianity is a communion of the soul with the living God, through the mediation of Christ. Herein is really included all that belongs to the characteristic life of Christendom—revelation and faith, conversion and the comfort of forgiveness, the joy of faith and the service of love, lonely communion with God, and life in Christian fellowship." [1] This personal relationship with God in Christ is something quite fundamental in Christianity. To be a Christian may involve other things as well, but it involves this relationship as a minimum. We are faced by this fact on every page of the New Testament. According to the New Testament, the essence of Christianity is Christ—a living, accessible Christ. "Detach Christianity from Christ," writes Canon Liddon, "and it vanishes before your eyes into intellectual

[1] Herrman, *Communion with God*, quoted by King, *The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life*, p. 215. Compare Bishop Gore's definition in his *Bampton Lectures*, p. 1: "True Christianity is a personal relationship—the conscious, deliberate adhesion of men who know their weakness, their sin, their fallibility, to a Redeemer Whom they know to be supreme, sinless, infallible."

vapour. . . . Christianity is non-existent apart from Christ; it centres in Christ; it radiates now, as at the first, from Christ." Through all the intricate variety of New Testament thought and expression there runs this one connecting thread, that everywhere we are in contact with a religious life which is determined throughout by Christ.

We may now proceed, still keeping to New Testament grounds, to define this relationship further as a *relationship of faith*. In the whole vocabulary of religion there is hardly a commoner word than faith. We find it constantly in the Bible; it is one of the commonplaces of religious parlance; it is an incessant demand from every Christian pulpit. From church and from chapel, from Sunday school and from street corner, from book and from pamphlet, there sounds forth the one refrain, You must believe. But faith is one of those words which enjoy more reiteration than explanation. What is faith? What are we to believe, and how are we to believe?

In view of the many misconceptions of faith, it might be well at once to state what faith is not. For instance, a living faith is entirely distinct from mere credence in certain historical facts. It is indeed true that Christianity is inseparably bound up with certain events that were enacted on the plane of history. And if a man denies that these events occurred, or refuses to assign them any value, he can hardly be called a Christian in the New Testament sense of the word. But however true this may be, the converse of the statement will

not stand. That is to say, although a Christian must needs believe in Christianity's historical facts, a mere assent to these facts is not enough to make a Christian. It is quite possible for a man to give credence to the events described in the New Testament, to believe that Jesus of Nazareth did actually live and die and rise again on this earth of ours, and at the same time to remain devoid of any vital faith in a living Christ. Further, if faith is not assent to history, neither is it assent to dogma. Dogma, as being the Church's reflection on and expression of her living faith, has had, and still has, an important and indispensable part to play in the progress of the Kingdom of God. But it was never more necessary than at the present time to discover and define the relation of dogma to personal religion. It was inevitable that Christianity, on emerging from its primitive stage, should become an institution with creeds and formulas of faith. But all through its history there has been a tendency, varying in strength, to misconceive the functions of its creeds. Dogma is a wall to protect, but men have made it into a barrier to exclude. "Believe this, and this, and this, and then perhaps you may be admitted within the sacred pale." No wonder that a certain impatience with dogma has grown up in our own day. If *this* is the door, men say, then Christianity is not for me. Such suspicions are not unreasonable. In view of them it cannot be asserted too emphatically that Christian belief is something infinitely greater and richer and simpler than mere assent to a certain number of theological proposi-

tions. Christianity does not involve a swallowing whole of other people's statements in defiance of one's own rebellious reason. Indeed, the supposed antithesis between faith and reason is largely imaginary.[1] Faith does not curb mental activity, rather it equips it for further exploration; it is, in truth, "not the anchor but the lodestar of the intellect."

What, then, are we to understand by "faith"? Faith, in its simplest sense, is a word describing that contact between the Divine and the human personality which, as we have already seen, is the essence of personal Christianity. Faith is not a something inside the man that has dropped from nowhere; it is not an aspiration, an emotion, an ecstatic state, an intellectual attitude. Faith cannot grow in a vacuum; in fact, the word is quite inapplicable save where two personalities are concerned.[2] Faith describes the process when I put myself into communication with the Person Who rules the universe. Faith means a conscious and deliberate grasping of the outstretched Hand of God. Faith means an absolute confidence in Christ that He is what He says He is, and will do what He says He will do. Faith makes this confidence active, not passive; it involves a going forth of the soul, of the spirit, on to Christ; a

[1] *Cf.* Chapter X.

[2] This emphasis on personality is a characteristic note of modern philosophy. Compare Storr, *Development and Divine Purpose*, p. 5: "Just because religion is the movement of man's whole personality towards that final unity which we call God, and which faith interprets as a person, the conception of personality remains the central conception in a Philosophy of Religion."

deliberate reaching forth to, and reposing in, another and greater personality, that of the Lord Himself.[1]

In answer to the question, Is "God" or "Christ" the object of Christian Faith? it may be said that if the "Incarnation" is a fact, then, ultimately, no true conception of God or contact with God is possible apart from Jesus Christ.[2] This is not to say that all faith in God must consciously connect itself with Jesus Christ. A man's first discoveries of God may come to him along channels that he does not recognize as Christian. Faith may be very imperfect and immature without being untrue. Yet, if the Christian idea of God is true, faith in God is, in the last resort, inseparable from the fact of Christ. And, as faith grows, that association of God and Christ will become the determining factor in the religious consciousness; St. John's statement will be felt to be true to experience, "no man cometh unto the Father but by Me."[3] As Dr. Chalmers used to put it, "I find that without a hold of Christ there is no hold of God at all."

So far, and in a limited sense, the contact of two human personalities provides us with a very fair

[1] It is significant that in the New Testament the verb meaning "to believe" is, in the great majority of cases, followed by a preposition governing the accusative case. This construction with the accusative involves an implication of "moral motion, mental direction towards"; it expresses "an absolute transference of trust from ourselves to another, a complete self-surrender to Christ." *Cf.* Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. i. p. 829.

[2] The truth of the Incarnation is assumed in this book, which is not a volume of "Apologetics."

[3] John xiv. 6.

analogy of man's contact with God. But the analogy is incomplete. It is seldom that I enjoy any personal relationship with a man I have never set eyes on; whereas faith in God does involve faith in the unseen. We cannot eliminate from faith the element of the unseen and the unknown.

Faith includes an intuitive grasp of the invisible spiritual world, a "conviction of the reality of things which we do not see." [1] In all this there is nothing abnormal and impossible. It is a mistake to suppose that faith occurs only in the vocabulary of religion. Both the word and the thing bulk large in our everyday life. "The greater part of our life is governed by belief in facts which we have not personally verified, and trust in people whom we have not personally tested. We think we live by sense and reason, but as a matter of fact we live largely by faith, which we only fail to recognize as such because it is instinctive and habitual." [2] We eat our food in the belief that it will nourish us, though most of us are quite ignorant of the chemical processes involved. Our relationships with other people, both social and commercial, are based on the supposition of their trustworthiness; we do not demand complete evidence of their reliability before having any dealings with them. It is, then, no unheard-of thing that we should be asked to venture into a region which lies beyond the range of actual vision. In that region, which once seemed an unreal land of shadows, faith walks with a firm tread and familiar step. Faith brings heaven down to earth. A man who "believes" means a man who

[1] Heb. xi. 6. [2] Illingworth, *Christian Character*, p. 65.

is absolutely certain of the reality of God as revealed in Christ. God is no dream, no figment of the imagination, no abstract conception of the intellect; nor is He merely a distant ruler of the world dwelling apart in splendid aloofness. To faith God is the greatest reality in all the world. Though all else on earth be a vain show, faith is sure that God is real, and that God is near. Faith is the rooted conviction that "God is, and is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." [1] "The steps of faith fall on the seeming void, and find the rock beneath."

Faith then stands for the instinctive certainty that God is real, and that He is accessible. But faith involves the further certainty that God is Love. Love is not a thing to demonstrate, but to feel. We have spoken of faith as a contact of personalities. But who am I, blind and sinning, that I should talk of contact with the personality of a holy God? Were it not for His love such contact would be out of the question. I cannot rise, so He must stoop. Faith is my response to His seeking love. So far from being a frantic struggle after the inaccessible, faith is a simple reposing on the strong fact of God's love. We should be saved much perplexity in the spiritual life if we could but realize the simplicity of faith. Faith is not a lengthy and somewhat mechanical process; its operation is spontaneous, direct, immediate. As St. Augustine beautifully said, "Do not conceive of long journeyings; when thou believest then thou comest; for to Him who is everywhere, men come by loving, not by travelling." The best

[1] 1 Heb. xi. 6.

way to enjoy the warmth of the sun is to give up academic discussions on the theory of heat, and simply go and sit in the sunshine. As Frederick Denison Maurice, in whom were conspicuously united a giant intellect with the faith of a little child, once wrote : " I think that to assure everyone, and specially those we most love, that God is Love, and that they are simply to repose in that thought without troubling themselves about their belief, or realization of it, or anything else, is our great business. God is seeking us, and not we Him; and it is an infinite comfort to know this when we are feverish and restless with the thought of our own impotent struggles and great laziness." [1]

But while faith is not a struggle, it must not be confused with a chance mood or with mere passivity. Faith possesses a definite element of will. Although it has in it more of instinct and intuition than of reasoned search, none the less it is not a something that is sent from heaven while we idly sit with folded hands. Faith is passive as viewed from the side of the spirit's repose in God; it is active in so far that no man can reach God without deliberate intention. " Have faith in God " [2] was one of our Lord's most definite commands; and it is not a commandment that can be obeyed unconsciously or absent-mindedly. In the act of believing, a man can hardly, as the Greeks used to put it, escape his own notice. An unwilling believer is a contradiction in terms. God will never thrust Himself on any man; He seems to

[1] *Life of F. D. Maurice*, vol. i. p. 219. [2] Mark xi. 22.

show a reverential respect for the freedom He has given. He is not far off, He is *there;* but faith must rise and seize that outstretched hand of Love.

Thus far we have seen that faith, in its simplest meaning, describes the contact of human personality with Divine. Noting the New Testament use of the word "believe," we found that faith is that which brings a man into conscious union with Jesus Christ. Now, it may not be unnecessary to emphasize the fact that this union with Christ is not simply a moral but a mystic union. It is one thing to find your moral ideal fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth and to become His disciple in the same sense in which you might call yourself a disciple of Plato, or of Aristotle, or of any of the other great thinkers of history. It is something totally different to enjoy the friendship and own the mastership of the living Christ, in the sense of consciously and continuously drawing spiritual life and force from Him—and nothing less is involved in a mystical union with Him. The idea of a mystical union with a spiritual Christ belongs to the essence of primitive Christianity, especially as recorded in the Epistles and in St. John's Gospel. St. Paul constantly uses the phrase "in Christ" as defining the normal state of the Christian believer; and St. John has preserved many of our Lord's own words which teach the same truth.[1] Indeed, from the New Testament it is abundantly clear that man's union with Christ involves more than response to a moral demand; and, further, that this mystical

[1] Compare, for example, Rom. viii. 1; 2 Cor. v. 16, 17; Eph. iii. 17; and the Discourses in John vi., xv.

union is not to be an esoteric cult of the few, but the normal experience of the ordinary Christian man. Such a union, transcending as it does our human experience, may well be termed mystical. And there is no need to be afraid of the word because it is sometimes misused and abused. Indeed there is no other adequate to the purpose. Every part and faculty of man's being is involved in the process described by "faith"—his reason, his intuition, his emotions, his will. There is a movement of his whole personality out on to Christ. There is a merging of his inner life in the Life of Christ. There is no hypnotizing of his will; but deliberately, gladly, he draws his inspiration for thought and action from another, greater Personality. It may be said without exaggeration that there is no true personal Christianity without this element of mysticism. To quote some forcible words of Professor Gwatkin, "The spark of life is mysticism. I do not mean the follies and worse than follies which bear the name, but the conviction, acted on if not expressed, that a true communion with the Divine is given to all that purify themselves with all the force of heart and soul and mind. If there is a man without a touch of this mystical faith, that man is dead while he liveth; for there can be no personal religion, and therefore no true religion, without something of it." [1]

But we have not yet explored all the region where faith is operative. There still remains for our investigation what is perhaps the highest work of human faith, and that is its grasp of God's

[1] *The Knowledge of God*, vol. ii. p. 327.

forgiveness. No account of faith can be complete which says nothing of its relation to the forgiveness of sins.

Be it noted that we are not at this moment concerned with any detailed investigation of the great questions of man's sin and God's forgiveness, nor is it our purpose to discuss here any particular theories of what is known as the Atonement.[1] We take the facts for granted, which is, after all, a legitimate assumption, for no unprejudiced reader of the New Testament can escape the conclusion that the intended effect of Christ's coming to earth was to condemn sin and redeem the sinner. The Atonement has indeed an appeal to reason. The student of the New Testament will scarcely be able to regard as irrational the way chosen by God to reveal Himself at once "just and the justifier of him that believeth." But we are not here immediately concerned with the *rationale* of the Atonement. Our sole object just now is to observe the part that faith is called to play.

We have been trying to show that the life of faith is a life of personal fellowship with God in Christ. Now a moment's reflection will show that there is a great and serious initial barrier to this fellowship, a barrier erected by man's sin. We are here in the region, not of theology, but of plain hard facts. The sinfulness of man and the holiness of God are not things that you learn from books; they are things that thrust themselves on your conscience in the path of common life. I

[1] Reference may be permitted here to the writer's *Thoughts on the Atonement* (Student Christian Movement).

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need no theology to tell me that the uncleanness of my life is something that affects God as well as me. Realizing that, I begin to realize what an obstacle looms ahead if I want to enter into fellowship with God. In ordinary life if I wrong my friend, I can hardly expect to renew the old intimacy as if nothing had happened. Can I expect God to act differently?

Whatever my fears, or doubts, or hopes, the plain fact remains that God has solved the insoluble problem. No man could move that barrier by an inch; so God, from the other side, with His own hand, has swept it clean away. There is no need here to quote any proof-texts. The story of God's solution of the problem of sin is the burden of the whole Bible. Let us try and think of it all as if we had never heard the story before. Christ died; man repents; God forgives. I turn my back on the old life, and turn my face to God, and behold—the barrier is gone. He is there, and I can reach Him. The past for me is wiped out, the mists have cleared away, and I can see God. How do I know? Because I have God's guarantee when I lift up my eyes to One hanging on the cross. Because, as I look, I begin to understand a little what God feels about sin, and how He wants men—wants even me—back again in fellowship with Him. My heart goes out to that Crucified One in penitence and love and hope; and as I look there surges through me the staggering certainty that that death means my life. How can I explain it? I cannot. It quite transcends my ordinary experience of cause and effect; it would be incredible

if it were not a fact. It is amazing, it is impossible, but it is true. "It is because I know forgiveness is so hard, and is opposed to strict justice, that I need it so terribly. I do not need your talk of nature's inevitable sequences to show me that pardon is a difficult thing, or that none but God can make white as wool those whose sins are as scarlet. That is clearer than the sun at noonday; it is precisely that which weighs upon me. It is the impossible in forgiveness that makes its beauty and gives wonder to the good tidings of the Cross." [1]

Here, no doubt, we are moving in a region of facts which, though not irrational, are certainly super-rational. We are in the uplands where reason finds the atmosphere rare and the going difficult; it takes faith to climb the path and breast the height. I hardly know how to understand it; I can only believe that "God for Christ's sake hath forgiven me." [2] I cannot do other than take Christ at His word when He says that His death is valid, "for the remission of sins," [3] including mine.

Perhaps a word of caution is needed at this point. That which has been said about faith and pardon must not be taken to imply that we must explore the whole meaning of sin and forgiveness at the very outset of our Christian life, nor that penitential tears are the only road to Christ. We may be very sure it will take a lifetime and more to discover the final meaning of sin and penitence and pardon. At the same time there is a true sense

[1] Figgis, *The Gospel and Human Needs*, p. 108.
[2] Eph. iv. 32 [3] Matt. xxvi. 28.

in which forgiveness is the threshold and not the goal of life with God; and, be it emphasized once more, forgiveness—forgiveness in the full sense of a renewed, restored relationship—is impossible apart from faith. "God's forgiveness is not given to the Christian by fits and starts, it is as complete from the first as it ever will be, it is a standing condition into which he comes through faith in Jesus, a condition by virtue of which alone can he live the kind of life and do the kind of work which God needs in His kingdom." [1]

One other word of caution in conclusion. The meaning of forgiveness is easily misconceived. Forgiveness does not mean that God ceases to be vindictive (which He never was). Nor does it mean, for us, an easy immunity from punishment, an immunity independent of moral conditions. Forgiveness depends absolutely on the man wanting, with all his will, to get away from sin and live his life with God. In forgiving the man, God deals with him according, not to his achievement, but his intention; disregarding the black past as though it were not, God trusts the man for the future because He can view his ideal possibilities *as he is in Christ.*

[1] Cairns, *Christianity in the Modern World*, p. 63.

CHAPTER II

FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

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"*Henceforth I call you not servants; . . . but I have called you friends.*"—John xv. 15.

"We discuss the *Way* as though He were an absent thing instead of a Person. We analyze the *Truth* as if He was an abstract theory instead of a simple fact. We view the *Life* as though He were an echo of yesterday instead of a present force to-day. But all the while Jesus persists in being ours."—Bishop Brent.

"Verily, it is a king's life to follow the Lamb."—Samuel Rutherford, *c.* 1636 A.D.

Such, then, if our analysis is correct, are the meaning and the main functions of faith. But our survey of the subject is not as yet complete. Thus far we have been considering faith in action; we have, as it were, seized a specimen Christian life midway on its course and have attempted to lay bare its secret. But it is not easy in thought, still less in practice, to isolate the act of faith from the life of faith. We saw in the first chapter that faith in its simple sense stands for an intimate relationship between the Divine personality and ours. If that is so, then we can go on to say that the chief condition of living a Christian life lies in the maintenance of this relationship. The problem before us, as Christians, is, as we shall see, at once easy and diffi-

cult. We have to discover how this new relationship may be lifted out of the spasmodic and the intermittent, and become something continuous, growing, and lasting.

It sometimes happens that Christian people are troubled with doubts about "perseverance." They have no doubt of their present faith, but they question whether they will be able to persevere to the end. Even if I am a Christian now, how do I know that I shall still be a Christian in ten years' time or on the day of my death? There is a simple answer to this difficulty, and one which illustrates our present point about this continuous spiritual relationship. It is this: "Perseverance" is a question of remaining, not in a state, but with a Person. I may not be able to forecast the exact state of my feelings twenty years hence; but, unless I meantime deny my truer self, I can hardly doubt that the distant future will still find me by the side of One Who will not let me go. This is the secret of the whole matter. The life of faith means nothing less than a life of constant and deliberate association with the living Person Jesus Christ. Take once more the analogy of human friendship. All true friendship has its basis in mutual self-revelation. There has to be a willingness to draw aside the veil and admit the other into secret places where the feet of strangers may not come. Unless there is this self-revelation, the would-be friends can be nothing more than acquaintances. And, further, besides being willing to reveal himself, each friend must entertain a reverent and affectionate desire to learn more of the personality

of the other. They will take pains to share each other's interests, to approve each other's aims, to understand and to learn from each other's highest motives. Now these laws of human friendship are closely analogous to the laws of the spiritual life; for the laws of the spiritual life are primarily the laws of a deepening personal relation. The life of faith, it may be said without exaggeration, is a life of friendship with God. To be a friend of God involves a mutual self-revelation on a wider and more costly scale than is involved in human intercourse. It means that I give Him the keys of my heart, that He may walk at will in its inmost chambers. It means that, day by day, I spare no pains and grudge no time in the effort to know Him, to return His love, to understand His thoughts, to share His purposes. It means that I must learn, with St. Paul, "to reckon all things as pure loss for the sake of the priceless privilege of knowing Christ my Lord."[1]

There are, naturally, two sides to this continuous, developing relationship. On the one side, let us note with thankfulness, He is not a reluctant and inaccessible God with Whom we have to do. The coming of God's Son to earth must have meant at least this, that God was and is infinitely anxious to reveal Himself to the sons of men. We have not got to persuade an otherwise unwilling God. There is far more initiative, and alacrity, and patience on His side than on ours. He is always "more ready to hear than we to pray." We should do well to rest more in the thought of God's willingness. It

[1] Phil. iii. 8 (Weymouth's Version).

cannot be too strongly emphasized that the spiritual life is not a life of constant mental strain : it involves rather a simple, natural, unforced attitude of reposing on the reality of God and resting calmly in His love.[1] " If God is real at all, and our relation to Him is a reality, the conviction of that reality is not to be simply our product, a thing up to which we must strain. . . . That certainty must be primarily God's work. One cannot wisely attempt, either for himself or for others, to do God's work." [2] " God is faithful, through Whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." [3]

But the two sides of the relationship must each receive their due emphasis. The spiritual life is certainly not a life of strain ; at the same time the fact remains that a man must take trouble and pains if he would practise the presence of God. This is indeed implied in what has already been said about the cost of mutual self-revelation. No friendship, whether with man or with God, can be built on absent-mindedness. It is a law of all life that nothing worth the having can be won without effort. Continuous association with the living Christ demands effort both deliberate and sustained. " Psychologically and experimentally it is true that the mind must continue to occupy itself with Christ if Christ is to continue as a dominating reality in one's life."[4] Faith is subject to the same laws as man's other faculties, and liable to become atrophied through

[1] *Cf.* above, p. 10.

[2] H. C. King, *The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life*, pp. 95, 96.

[3] 1 Cor. i. 9.

[4] J. R. Mott, *Jesus Christ a Reality*, p. 8.

disuse. No pains must be spared, no means must be lost, if faith is to be developed from an occasional act into a permanent habit.

One cannot be too practical in his endeavour to live the life of faith. The man who is in earnest with the spiritual life, who is bent on exploring the riches of a friendship with God, will find that any aids, however slight, any precautions, however trivial, are well worth while. He will find, for instance, that it is indispensable to secure at the beginning of each day a time of unhurried quiet with God. At frequent intervals throughout the day he will, no doubt, be throwing a momentary upward glance to his unseen Friend. Or many things may happen, in his business, or his reading or his intercourse, to remind him of that Friend. But neither the momentary prayer nor the occasional reminder can take the place of that quiet interview with his Lord when first the day begins. With all his faculties alert, with his mind as yet unoccupied with the common traffic of the coming day, he will come to the sacred trysting-place, there to refresh his soul in quiet communion with his Master. Only those who have tried to keep the "Morning Watch" know how easily that quiet time can be broken into, or hurried over, or postponed. Only they know how strong are the temptations to indolence and haste and wandering thoughts. Any excuse seems good enough to forgo that hour of prayer; one persuades himself that he will be able to find some other time later on in the day. But that other time never arrives. And the morning indolence or forgetfulness is responsible for many a moral and

spiritual failure through the day. He that saveth time from prayer shall lose it; it takes sometimes a long experience of failure to learn that fact, and jealously to guard a time and place for secret prayer. "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee." [1]

The men who in history have made the deepest religious impression on their contemporaries have uniformly been men who practised the presence of God. Henry Martyn, Senior Wrangler and Missionary, has left on record the secret of the far-reaching influence of his very brief life. "My chief enjoyment," he confesses in his diary, "was the enjoyment of God's presence." Stonewall Jackson was a man who "literally carried the saintliness of the cloister into the turmoil of the camp. He began each day with an unhurried time of Bible study and secret prayer." [2] Samuel Rutherford, that much-persecuted saint of the seventeenth century, used to rise at three in order to get time for prayer and study before he started on his parish visiting. Luther, when he had a particularly busy or trying day before him, would often double the ordinary time of his morning prayer. Writes Brother Lawrence, in 1688: "Hold yourself in prayer before God, like a poor, dumb, paralytic beggar at a rich man's gate. Let it be your business to keep your mind in the presence of the Lord."

Such instances could be multiplied almost indefinitely. They simply illustrate a point which

[1] Matt. vi. 6. [2] Mott, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

is self-evident. The river must have a spring; life can only come from life. The man who would explore the meaning of personal Christianity must learn to spend time alone with God.

Our survey of the conditions of the life of faith would be incomplete without any reference to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper—the Sacrament of the Christian's friendship with Christ. For by its institution that Sacrament is plainly intended to be, and in history has proved to be, a factor of vital importance in the Christian life. It is not necessary here to concern ourselves with questions arising from the mode of the Sacrament's operation. All that will be attempted is to indicate something of the Sacrament's meaning for the ordinary Christian man.

To begin with its more general meaning, it may be said that the Sacrament of the Holy Communion is, to the believing man, a pledge of the reality of the unseen world. There is a true sense in which the whole visible world in which we live has a sacramental significance. For the seeing eye the material universe is but a veil for the Mind and the Meaning behind it. Every flower that grows has its life from the Life of God, and bears on its face the mark of the Mind of God. All that we see and hear and handle gains meaning and value from thought and love. At our best moments we all believe that the unseen world is the real world, and that our disordered lives may win beauty and purity from contact with its hidden realities. To this tremendous fact the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a perpetual witness. Here we have

the sum and climax of the sacramental truth that lies about our lives. Here is the final instance of matter subserving spirit. To find God in the eating of bread and the drinking of wine—such an experience is a guarantee that the spiritual world is not beyond the clouds but here on this very earth. It is a standing protest against materialism of every kind, and especially the materialism that so easily dims the vision of the soul athirst for God.

And to develop this thought further, the Sacrament on this aspect witnesses to the sacred and intimate connection of the physical and spiritual in man. It speaks to us of the reverence due to the body as being the expression of the spiritual life, as in truth "the temple of the Holy Ghost." The Incarnation was the supreme instance of a human body acting as the perfect instrument of the life of the Spirit. And in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood the Incarnate Christ left us a pledge that His experience had made possible a similar experience for us. No increase in spirituality can ever free us from the sacramental fact that the body is the medium of the spiritual life. And therefore to despise the body as an unspiritual, or to neglect it as an unimportant, factor in our progress, will be seriously to hinder our union with God in Christ which, as we have seen, is the meaning of faith.

But the Holy Communion carries with it, for the Christian disciple, a significance richer still and more definite than that to which reference has just been made. It is a guarantee, a pledge which he can see and handle, of the reality of

that mystic personal relationship with Jesus Christ which we saw to be fundamental to the Christian life. Let us take three of the features of that relationship which we noticed, and see how each gains an added reality from its connection with this Sacrament. We saw how necessary it is to emphasize the Divine side of the relationship, to realize that God wants this contact far more than we do. That God's utter willingness is no figment of our imagination, is pledged by the bare fact of this sacred Feast ordained by Christ Himself. It is not our doing, but His. It is no man-made memorial, it is a Divine Gift. The initiative is His; the hallowed friendship begins from His side. As I draw near to His table, and receive the pledges of His love, there wells up in my heart a new and grateful sense that He wants me, that He has a place for me to fill, a work for me to do; that—marvel of marvels!—He has

> ". . . stoop'd to ask of me,
> The love of my poor heart!"

We saw, too, how at the very threshold of the life of faith there must be some sense of God's forgiveness. We may truly say that here, at the Communion, we have given into our hands the Royal Pardon, signed and sealed. The broken bread and the outpoured wine speak to us of the slain Body and the shed Blood; as we eat the bread and drink the wine we *know*, as with the certainty of sight and touch, that that Death long ago has indeed availed for the remission of the sins of the whole world, and that our own pardon is no fond

delusion of a baseless hope. It is as if He Himself stood there, the Lamb once slain, and spoke to us in audible tones. . . . "It is no dream that I died for you, it is no dream that your forgiveness is a real thing, any more than your eating and drinking is a dream. . . ."

And not only is the Sacrament a pledge to us of forgiveness through His death and passion; it is, further, a veritable channel through which His life may flow into our lives. To come with humble faith and eat that bread and drink that wine is, in a mysterious but true sense, to feed on "the food that abideth unto eternal life."[1] Here is a God-given means, which the Christian man dare not neglect, whereby may be maintained that mystic oneness with Christ which is of the essence of the life of faith. This Sacrament provides a bond, a point of contact, of a very special kind. We may think of it in this way. Community of nature is one of the strongest links we know. There is an understanding intimacy between brother and brother to which no outsider can possibly attain. Now, if I am to know Christ in any real sense, there must be some common link between us, some kind of underlying family relationship. Blood is thicker than water; and, to the man seeking the friendship of Christ, this Sacrament carries the force, as it were, of a blood-covenant. The "blood-covenant" is a ceremonial method, widespread among primitive peoples, of contracting friendship, the essential feature of the rite being a commingling of their blood on the part of the two covenanting

[1] John vi. 27.

parties. In giving me the bread and wine, the Living Christ gives me, in symbol, His own Body and Blood. He actually imparts something of His own nature to me, so that I am no more a stranger but a brother. It cost Him His life thus to give me Himself. And to make the blood-covenant complete I too must give Him of myself; at the cost of a real surrender I must "offer and present unto Him myself, my soul and body, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him." Thus shall the mutual giving be complete; and the Sacrament becomes a wonderful and welcome pledge that I am His, and He is mine.[1]

The Lord's Supper is, lastly, a sacred pledge of fellowship with all who share the one Faith. To partake is to be assured that "we are very members incorporate in the mystical Body of God's Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people." Any examination of the meaning and the life of faith must take into consideration this idea of a *common* faith; and to a brief study of this idea we will devote the concluding pages of this chapter.

It ought to be possible for Christian thought and Christian practice to steer a middle course between a barren individualism on the one hand, and, on the other, an inflated conception of the being and the functions of a "Church." What, after all, is the root idea of a *Church?* It might be roughly outlined thus. When a man through faith enters into contact with Christ—however dim his faith and slight his contact—at once, by

[1] For the idea outlined in this section the writer is indebted to *Vital Religion* [ch. x.], by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Walpole, D.D.

virtue of that contact, he becomes, at it were automatically, a member of a Body already in existence. For a man to believe, and then, on believing, to consider the advisability of attaching himself to some circle of like-minded people—that is not the New Testament idea of a Church. In New Testament thought the Church is *there*: not by the will of man, but by the will of God. And the Sacrament of Baptism, at the minimum of its Apostolic significance, must mean a sacred guarantee of membership in the Divine Society. Those who are linked together by the faith of Christ are *ipso facto* members of Christ's Body. Whether they realize it or not is another question. But nothing can alter the fact that, as believers, they are members of Him and therefore of one another. "Each believer in Him enters into an Organic Whole, and finds himself playing his allotted part as a member within a body. He cannot have sent his spirit out in the movement which we call faith without, by that very fact, entering into union with One Who is united by an identical bond with all those who have so believed." [1] "Ye are come," says the writer to the Hebrews, "unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." [2] So also St. Paul: "Ye are no more strangers and

[1] H. S. Holland, *God's City*, p. 21.
[2] Heb. xii. 22, 23.

sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." [1]

If such then is the fundamental idea of a Church there follows from it a fact of very great importance; the fact that fulness of spiritual life is unattainable in isolation. We have already seen something, and in subsequent chapters we shall see yet more, of the meaning of a life lived with Christ and for Christ. But let us note here that the riches of such a life cannot be fully explored on an isolated, private quest. It is only "with all the saints" that we can hope to "apprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." [2] There is nothing strange in all this. It is being increasingly recognized in our modern life that we are all of us members one of another. The solidarity of human society is becoming more and more apparent. Co-operation is displacing competition. On all sides men are seeing that, by recognizing the unity of society and bringing into play the forces of co-operative thought and action, far better and greater results can be achieved than by the old method of every man for himself. That is a lesson which the Christian Church has always known theoretically, if it has not always given it practical effect. But there is a higher truth of co-operation which we are only gradually grasping, which is that we can not only *do* more but we can *be* more together than we can apart. There are, we may be sure, whole stretches of Christian faith and experience which will never be reached and

[1] Eph ii. 19. [2] Eph. iii. 18, 19.

traversed until the whole company of God's faithful people move on thither together. Think, for instance, of the stupendous task of world-evangelization which to-day confronts the Church of God. Such a tremendous adventure demands an entirely new scale of faith and sacrifice. But the task, and the conditions of its accomplishment, are conceptions so overwhelming in their immensity, that we can hardly dare even to contemplate them alone. We must think and act corporately, or leave off dreaming our dreams. If we are to recover Christ's faith in God, and Christ's power with men, it will be done, not by the spasmodic movement of isolated individuals, but by the sweeping of one spirit through the whole great army, like the wind that sways the cornfield from end to end.

But this is not all. The New Testament suggests an even greater thought about the Church. St. Paul goes so far as to speak of the Church, "which is Christ's Body," as "the completeness of Him Who everywhere fills the universe with Himself."[1] Christ, in St. Paul's conception, is the Head of the Body which is to supplement and complete Himself. The Incarnation was the promise of the Church that is to be; the perfecting of the Church will mean the completion of the Incarnation. Such a thought adds a wholly new significance to all spiritual life, both corporate and individual. "Every great personality," says Professor Harnack, "reveals a part of what it is only when seen in those it influences. The more powerful a personality a man possesses, and the more he takes hold of the

[1] Eph. i. 23 (Weymouth's version).

inner life of others, the less can the sum total of what he is be known by what he says himself and does." [1] This is a truth which gives new meaning to world-evangelization. How can there be any complete revealing of Christ till each nation and race has brought to Him its own characteristic medium for the interpretation of His Personality? It is a truth which adds a new momentum to the present widespread longing for unity. How can the fulness of Christ be known while His Body the Church is rent and split by our miserable divisions? There are signs, thank God, of a new spirit of penitence breathing in the severed fragments; we are beginning to see both the sin and the waste of our divisions, and how grievously they hinder the forward march of the Kingdom of God. And, in the plans and hopes for unity, the Apostolic principle is not unrecognized that the key of unity must be inclusion not exclusion, addition not subtraction. It is not the poor and meagre sameness of the least common denominator that we must search for, but the rich and comprehensive unity of the greatest common measure, which can only come through the bountiful contribution of his best from every several member; "the unity which seeks rather the synthesis than the sacrifice of distinctions." Both for individuals and for Churches unity must mean,not a mech anical suppression of individuality, but a glad and free bringing of the particular heritage into the common wealth.

And, finally, this thought of Christ's delayed fulfilment is a new and powerful motive for every

[1] Quoted by A. W. Robinson, *Are we Making Progress?* p. 25.

Christian disciple as he sets forth upon the highway of God. The "completeness" of Christ is tarrying till we each and all "arrive at oneness in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and at mature manhood and the stature of full-grown men in Christ."[1] In proportion as I fail, I am dwarfing and stunting the stature of the Body of Christ. In proportion as I am faithful, I am contributing to His completeness. What a motive for venturing forth to live the life of faith. *Wanted* by Christ as a member of His Body, as a living stone for His glorious Temple, as an element without which His own completeness must needs abide imperfect—if that is so, how can I choose but arise and, as I am, go after Him?

[1] Eph. iv. 13 (Weymouth's version). Quite literally: "Until we attain to . . . *a full-grown man*" St. Paul's use of the singular in such a context is suggestive.

CHAPTER III

CHRIST AND CHARACTER

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"Sow an act and you reap a habit; sow a habit and you reap a character; sow a character and you reap a destiny."—BOARDMAN.

"To be like Christ must mean far more than men can yet imagine; but the beginnings of the likeness, the first hints at least of His lineaments are unmistakably present in the traits men gain as by His grace they serve and follow Him in this world."—FRANCIS PAGET, Bishop of Oxford.

IN the first two chapters we saw that faith, in its simplest sense, stands for the relationship between two personalities, the Divine and the human, and that personal Christianity rests entirely upon the due maintenance of that relationship. We have now to note the tremendous consequences for life and character which that relationship involves.

There are some latter-day philosophers who are fond of exalting morality at the expense of religion. The important thing about a man, they insist, is not whether his belief is correct, but whether his conduct is right. Religion in their view is a mere appendage to morality, an appendage which may be ornamental, but can hardly be deemed essential. Now, it is true that in some of the great world religions, belief and conduct have nothing whatever

to do with each other. But let us be quite clear about the fact that, where Christianity is concerned, religion and morality are inseparable.[1] In the religion of Jesus Christ a faith in God which fails to produce right conduct is no faith at all. Theological controversies about the respective importance of faith and works appear now to be beside the point. It is idle to talk of one without the other. A faith that is true faith must needs be producing the fruit, however immature and insignificant, of a Christ-like character. And, on the other hand, when you see a Christ-like character, you know that there is, ultimately, "faith" behind it. This is not to say that every truly good man is consciously a Christian; sometimes he is not. But it is probable that his goodness is largely derived, in the last resort, from the Christian tradition and the Christian atmosphere; and it is arguable that his character, however "good," will fall short of its highest possibilities until he does learn consciously to know Christ. The fresh air of common sense has, by now, blown away the dust of many theological disputes, and breathed new life into some of the mummies of theological phraseology. We are, for instance, learning that it is not only dangerous but false to draw a sharp distinction between "the Gospel of being saved," and "the Gospel of being good." We are beginning to realize that salvation is present and positive. The point of salvation lies not in what is avoided but in what is found. To be saved means to enter the life of God and to

[1] The New Testament is emphatic on this point. See, for example, 1 John iii. 5–10; Gal. v. 16–24.

share His character. And is the winning of character a selfish aim? Assuredly not. For in the Christian ideal the ultimate motive is always the glory of God. I want a Christ-like character, not simply because that is the best thing in life, but in order that I may thereby prove a better implement for God to use in the working out of His purposes.

The man who sets out to be a disciple of Christ perforce parts company for ever with second-best ideals. A moderate and reasonable standard of goodness ceases to be an aim that satisfies. A character that on all its facets bears the one distinguishing mark of Christ-likeness—no lower ideal than this will content the follower of Jesus Christ. This ideal is vividly suggested by the original Greek word which underlies our English word "character." This word is only used once in the New Testament (Heb. i. 3), a passage where Christ is called the "character" the "exact representation" of the being of God. The word contains the idea both of impression and of expression. The coin is impressed with the likeness of which it becomes the expression. God was so perfectly impressed on Jesus of Nazareth that men could see in His life a manifest expression, an exact facsimile, of God Himself. And the true disciple of Jesus is so impressed with his Master's likeness as to express, to reproduce, that Divine image before the eyes of the sons of men.

Is not such an ideal visionary, exaggerated, impossible? One is almost tempted to think so at first sight. Yet we find Christ setting this ideal

before His followers as the normal aim of their lives. "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." [1] The New Testament throughout is permeated with the same ideal. There are no easier courses for the sluggish or backward pupils. Every Christian is set to scale the topmost height. Indeed, we do well to face the fact that Christianity is full of the impossible, not only in the transcendent height of its ideal, but also in the amazing power produced for the realization of that ideal.

But the problem of character has other, and more troublesome, aspects. There are two outstanding features which confront our view. One, which we have been examining above, is the haunting presence of this ideal, this vision of our character as it is conceived in the Divine purposes. The other, and it is often the more obtrusive feature, is a disappointing sense of weakness and failure, a grave and seemingly perpetual inability to realize this longed-for yet elusive ideal. There is indeed one potent factor at work which accounts for this yawning gap between what we are and what we long to be. This factor is *sin*.

It is very clear that success in the Christian life will only be achieved by resolutely facing up to all the facts and looking them squarely in the face. This fact of sin is the ugliest and most unpleasantly obtrusive of all the facts. It is somewhat out of fashion in this twentieth century to emphasize the fact of sin. Modern thought is very busy trying to push it out of sight, or dressing

[1] Matt. v. 48.

it up in all sorts and kinds of disguises. The novelist displays it as interesting, thrilling, or amusing; while the philosopher labours to show you that it is a morbid illusion, or a mere relic of the animal, or a temporary step in the upward progress of the race. But in spite of all our pleasant imaginings, we are always being brought back with an uncomfortable jerk to the fact that sin is sin. And the man who is in earnest with life learns only too thoroughly that sin is the perpetual hindrance to the attainment of a Christ-like character. The hindrance is serious and central. Sin is not so much the open enemy outside the walls as the hidden traitor within the fortress. It operates at the centre of man's personality. Its great power lies in just the fact that it affects and perverts the sovereign part of his being, namely, his will. Indeed, we seem at times to have two wills, a will to do right and a will to do wrong, a will to please God and a will to please self. And the result is constant warfare. Keen and prolonged is the struggle within. Even those men who have walked in the closest fellowship with God have tasted the bitterness of this daily struggle. Listen to this piece of St. Paul's autobiography: "What I desire to do is not what I do, but what I am averse to is what I do. I know that in me, that is, in my lower self, nothing good has its home; for while the will to do right is present with me, the power to carry it out is not. For what I do is not the good thing I desire to do; but the evil thing that I desire not to do, is what I constantly do. I find, therefore, the law of my nature to be that when I desire to do

what is right, evil is lying in ambush for me. For in my inmost self all my sympathy is with the Law of God; but I discover within me a different Law at war with the Law of my understanding, and leading me captive to the Law which is everywhere at work in my body—the Law of sin. Unhappy man that I am! Who will rescue me from this death-burdened body?"[1] Do not our own hearts repeat his experience and re-echo his cry for deliverance? Is it possible for frequent defeat to give way to habitual victory? Shall a Christ-like character ever be reared on this death-strewn battlefield?

It is the glory of Christianity that it answers these questions with an unhesitating affirmative. A fully perfected character is obviously not to be achieved on this side of the grave. Nor can we expect in this life to enjoy immunity from struggle and temptation. What we may and ought to look for is an emergence from a state of fruitless struggle into a state where victory is the rule and defeat the exception. We may certainly expect to find our character rescued from the moulding influence of sinful habit, and its lines set afresh in the mint of God, there to receive an ever-deepening impress of the image of Christ.

How, then, shall this transformation be achieved? The two essential conditions of success may be summarized in two words: faith and obedience. Faith in God that He will do for me and in me that which I cannot possibly do by my own unaided efforts; and obedience to those "natural" (and

[1] Rom. vii. 15*f* (Weymouth's version).

therefore Divine) laws which govern the development of every human character. These conditions interact; each requires the presence of the other. On the one hand, I need not expect that God will work a miracle to save me trouble, to make up for my moral and spiritual inertia. On the other hand, it is quite futile to rely wholly upon effort and resolution, without seeking help from outside and above; as well might a drowning man try to lift himself out of the water by his own hair. What we must do is carefully to examine each of these conditions and see how they are correlated.

First of all, then, let us mark the fact that character is the gift of God. A great effect demands a great cause, and if my character is actually to be Christ-like it will have to be moulded and fashioned by the fingers of God. That man may live the Christian life at all is due to a vital force acting on him from outside. "Except a man be born from *above*, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."[1] Man is no more able himself to create his Christian life than he is able to bring himself into the world at will. To describe either process no lesser words are adequate than birth and life. "Not more certain is it that it is something outside the thermometer that produces a change in the thermometer, than it is something outside the soul of man that produces a moral change upon him. That he must be susceptible to that change, that he must be a party to it, goes without saying; but that neither his aptitude nor his will can produce

[1] John iii. 3 (R. V. margin).

it, is equally certain."[1] At this point we find ourselves face to face with the supernatural in Christianity. We cannot escape it even if we would. When a man begins to live the Christian life, when he finds a spiritual and moral transformation proceeding at the centre of his being—here is simply miracle. Here is a process which it is impossible to account for by purely natural causes.

If character is a gift, man must put out his hands to receive it. And it is in the act, or rather process, of receiving, that faith plays an essential part. To receive this gift from God involves that personal relationship with Him for which, as we saw in the first chapter, faith stands. To sum it up briefly, the dependence of character on faith will mean an attitude something like this: First, a personal relationship between God and myself. Next, a firm belief that God *is able* to work out in me a character unattainable by my own efforts. Further, a rooted confidence that He is willing to do this. And lastly, a genuine willingness on my part to let Him do it.

Faith in God, then, is the first essential condition of a Christian character. The other essential condition resides in a willing and habitual co-operation with those unchanging laws which govern the growth of character. The scientist must work upon the basis of known sequences or he will learn nothing. The athlete must fulfil the conditions which alone give sound wind and well-trained

[1] Drummond, *The Greatest Thing in the World, and other Addresses*, p. 190.

muscles or his efforts will be fruitless. And the Christian man must likewise give heed to the laws of right living, or the Christian character is not for him.

Take, for instance, the pre-eminent importance of habit. In all the spheres of life habit works with a certainty that is almost terrifying. "Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice," said Professor William James, "leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time.' Well, he may not count it, and a kind heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among the nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering it and storing it up, to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work."[1] Habit makes a good servant but a hard master. It is not only worth while, it is quite essential to enlist habit on the side of the spiritual life, to compel it to subserve the development of a Christ-like character.

And how can this be done? How can we alter our habits in the desired direction? We may put ourselves on the track of an answer by asking another question: What makes a habit? Without

[1] James, *Talks to Teachers in Psychology*, vol. i. p. 127.

doubt one of the chief operating causes behind the formation of a habit is *will-power*. I *will* to do a thing; then I will it again; I go on willing it for several performances. Then, gradually, the effort of will becomes less and less necessary, as the action becomes habitual or indeed wholly automatic. Now will-power is largely a question of self-control, and self-control is in its turn largely a question of *attention*. Modern psychology has emphasized afresh the enormous power of mind and thought in making a character, in building a soul; "what a man thinks, he becomes." And what a man thinks, we may add, is chiefly a question of what he deliberately attends to. We are often told that a man is made by his environment. It would be nearer the truth to say that a man is made by that part of his environment to which he *attends*. "The same environment means very different things to different men. Why? Because different men are attending to different things in it. Let ten men travel over exactly the same route in Europe; do they come back with the same things? By no means. Each man has seen and gotten what he attended to." [1]

We can see now how all-important is this faculty of attention in forming the habits of a Christian character. How can we possibly expect to have a character that is Christ-like if, during every day, our attention is distracted by a thousand and one things that have nothing to do with Christ? We need—if we are in earnest with this question—resolutely to fix our attention on the thoughts

[1] H. C. King, *The Fight for Character*, p. 19.

and facts and aims which shall make for the accomplishment of our great object. A man cannot be a saint if he is perpetually attending to sin. And he cannot be a sinner if he is perpetually attending to the things of God. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; whatever virtue there is, and whatever praise there is, *think on these things*."[1] It is true we cannot directly control our emotions, but we can establish an indirect control by means of this faculty of attention. "Over feeling itself we have no direct power; it arises involuntarily in the presence of its existing object; but we *can* determine to what objects we will attend."[2]

Further, this faculty of attention is a highly important factor in withstanding the onset of temptation. There are few men strong enough, when temptation comes, to keep looking at it and still beat it back. For most men to look at temptation is to invite defeat. We cannot hope to conquer that way; but we can at least turn our attention to something else. "The small boy, who is looking through a fence at a patch of water-melons that are not his, cannot prevent his mouth from watering, *but he can run*."[3] The advice sounds homely enough, but it follows a fixed psychological and spiritual law, and tallies with an age-long and world-wide Christian experi-

[1] Phil. iv. 8.
[2] H. C. King, *Rational Living*, p. 187.
[3] King, *Fight for Character*, p. 18.

ence. "An image is thrown upon the screen of your mind and you look at it. How can you dismiss it? You can only dismiss it by throwing another image on the screen which will be more beautiful, more pure, and more attractive, and which, above all, will preoccupy your mind, so that the other image will fade away." [1] St. Paul understood this law and insisted on it as only he could: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." [2] "Thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness"; [3] "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." [4]

Last, and most important of all these natural conditions of character, is that which we may call the law of personal association. This law, in its bearing upon our present subject, may be very simply stated in two propositions. The first is this: character must be caught, not taught; it is more a matter of contagion than of conscious imitation. The other follows logically. If character is contagious, the highest character can only be acquired by persistent association with the one perfectly good Man, Jesus Christ. And so we come back again to the point reached in the second chapter. From a new point of view we see how vital it is to maintain that relationship of which, as we noted, the life of faith consists. For character's sake it is essential to practise the presence of God;

[1] Drummond, *Stones Rolled Away, and other Addresses*, p. 129.
[2] Gal. v. 16. [3] 1 Tim. vi. 11.
[4] 2 Cor. x. 5.

for character's sake it is indispensable to spend time with Jesus Christ.

This law of association is one which we may constantly see operating in human relationships. "No man liveth unto himself;" whether he will or no a man's character is perpetually receiving impressions from other men. And where he deliberately cultivates friendship and intercourse, the impression is proportionately greater. Is it any marvel, then, that the influence of Christ on character should be transforming in its effects? Think of the astonishing change He wrought in the Apostle Paul. Think of the yet more astonishing transformation of those few fishermen who "companied with Him" in the days of His flesh. They were admitted to His friendship. They lived with Him, watched Him, worked with Him. Later, they learnt to enjoy His friendship without His visible presence. His spirit controlled them, filled them, inspired them. And these men, once raw, ignorant, unspiritual, end by turning the world upside down. How? They lived with Jesus. Dumfounded spectators divine that this must be the reason—"they had been with Jesus."[1] "Unparalleled phenomenon, that these poor fishermen should remind other men of Christ! Stupendous victory and mystery of regeneration that mortal men should suggest to the world, God!"

Such is the meaning, and secret, and result of a Christ-like character. I can conceive of no vocation so great, no purpose so inspiring, as to live a life that shall make men want to know the Son of God.

[1] Acts iv. 13.

CHAPTER IV

THE VALUE OF BIBLE STUDY

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" . . . These writings bring before thee, Reader, the lively likeness of that all-holy mind; and the very Christ Himself in His talking, in His healing, in His dying, in His rising again—the whole Christ, in a word, they so present to thy view, that if thou shouldst behold His form with thy bodily eyes, methinks thou wouldst see Him less ! "—ERASMUS, A.D. 1516.

IT is a noteworthy and indisputable fact that, ever since the Christian era began, Christian faith and Christian character have invariably been bound up with an unremitting study of the Bible. Here is a book which, in the nature of its contents, and in the range of its influence, presents a unique phenomenon. It is a book which stands apart. In the whole of literature no adequate parallel to it can be found. Its beginnings reach back to the dim past of some three thousand years ago, yet its power over mankind to-day continues unabated and unmeasured. The first and oldest part of this unique book was revered and trusted and used by Jesus of Nazareth. The second part, that which is known as the New Testament, was recognized as God's gift to man very soon after the lifetime of Christ's first disciples. And ever afterwards the whole book became something indispensable to every one who named the Name of

Christ. Untold millions of men and women have found in this book their refuge and their strength, their inspiration and their hope.

It is a book which presents a paradoxical combination of complexity and simplicity, of diversity and unity. Between its covers is a library of sixty-six books, written by men of varied type and in widely different circumstances, their authorship spreading over a period of perhaps a thousand years. Yet these many books make one book. Their unity is unmistakable. "The phenomenon of the Bible . . . is as if in England we should have a volume, the product of English minds, beginning with Caedmon or with Alfred, and ending, let us say, with Wordsworth or with Tennyson, which should yet be recognized as not only a Collection, embracing elements of poetical and prose narrative, devotion, morals, and what not, each element carrying its own colour of character and of time, but also as a Work, full of inner unities, portable and usable as the ordered product of a presiding thought."[1] And what is the secret of this unity? What is the alchemy which welds into a living whole these numerous and divers elements? It is simply this: That all these books which the Bible includes form a continuous and consistent record of God's historical revelation of Himself which culminated in Jesus Christ. That is the thread which runs through the whole Bible from beginning to end. No critical analysis of its constituent parts can impair the unity of the whole. As Principal Rainy has said: "When you

[1] Moule, *Faith: its Nature and its Work*, p. 170.

have taken the Christian revelation to pieces, the living whole draws itself together again, looks you in the face, refuses to be conceived in that manner, reclaims its scattered members, and reasserts itself to be a great burst of coherent life and light centring in Christ." [1]

And of all the books that were ever penned, this book has wielded incomparably the greatest influence on the life of the world. It is true to say that all that is best in Western civilization will be found to be based ultimately on the Bible. Throughout history down to the present time, the Bible has proved the corner-stone of the Christian life, whether national, ecclesiastical, or individual. It is, in short, the plain fact that the Christian man cannot do without his Bible; take away his Bible, and his religious life will starve.

We may now go on to ask the question, *Why* is this the case? Why is the Bible indispensable to the man who would live the Christian life of communion with God? The answer to this question might be briefly and roughly stated thus: Christianity is bound up with certain historic facts, and therefore with the records in which those facts are enshrined.

It has become necessary in our day to insist afresh on the vital connection of Christianity with its records. For there are some modern thinkers who roundly assert that this connection is immaterial. Religion, say they, belongs to the realm of ideas. Provided that the idea of Christianity is spiritually true, what does it matter if the historic facts on

[1] Quoted by Harrington Lees, *The Joy of Bible Study*, p. 10.

which it is supposed to rest should prove to be false? To follow up this question and attempt to answer it fully would take us too far from our present subject. Suffice it to say that this idealistic interpretation of the Gospel may be attractive to the imaginative or philosophic mind, but it is not Christianity. For better or for worse, Christianity cannot possibly be disentangled from certain events which happened on the plane of history. "Christianity sinks or swims with the assertion that at a certain period of time a human personality appeared on the stage of history and was the incarnate Son of God." [1]

This same fact—Christianity's connection with its records—may be stated from another and vitally important point of view. Christianity is Christ. Take Christ away from Christianity and very little is left; it is taking the kernel and leaving the husk. As we have seen in previous chapters, Christianity consists above all else in personal relationship with God through Christ; know Christ, and you will know God. But—to push the question further back—how may Christ be known? How can I know some one whom I have never seen, and of whose personality I am quite ignorant? There is only one way. If I want to know Christ as He is, I must learn to know Him as He was. For He actually once appeared on this earth of ours, and showed Himself to the sons of men. Some of those who saw Him recorded what they saw. And the portrait which they drew still exists and is accessible. If I then wish to know the Original, with infinite

[1] Peake, *Christianity: its Nature and its Truth*, p. 143.

pains and patience must I study the one authentic portrait. Only so may I come face to face with the Person of the Son of God.

This knowledge of God in Christ is the supreme object of all Bible study. Bible study is not an end in itself, it is rather a means to an end. A profound knowledge of Hebrew idiom or of the grammar of New Testament Greek may still leave its possessor ignorant of what the Bible is primarily concerned to teach. The Bible student has constantly to remind himself that his task is not the mere deciphering of dead and dusty records, not the disinterment of an archaic philosophy, but rather the endeavour to enter into the mind of a living Person, to grasp His plans and ideals, and to see life, not merely as He saw it, but as He sees it. The Bible is the way into the knowledge of Christ. It is the key with which we may unlock the otherwise closed door. If a man misses the true aim and function of Bible study, he is always liable to fall on the one side into mere Bibliolatry,[1] and on the other into a vague religious idealism unrelated to solid fact.

Bible study, then, is a means to an end. And further, it will be found that those means, in the several parts of the Bible, vary considerably both in the manner and the matter of their contribution

[1] Compare an emphatic, though not an exaggerated, statement which Frederick Denison Maurice once made: "The Bible, as a means of attaining to the knowledge of the living God, is precious beyond all expression or conception; when made a substitute for that knowledge, it may become a greater deadener to the human spirit than all other books."—From a letter to Charles Kingsley, *Life of Kingsley*, vol. i. p. 128.

to the common end. You will, for instance, discover far more of the mind and character of God from the Gospel of St. John than from the book of Ecclesiastes. While every separate part of the Bible makes its own special contribution to the one great object, of the two Testaments the New will be found to be much more essential to the purpose than the Old. Anyone beginning to study the Bible for the first time would be well advised to begin with the New Testament and work backwards to the Old. The Gospels, each viewing the one unique Figure from a different angle, together produce a portrait so consistent, so lifelike, so convincing, that as you look you seem to be brought face to face with the One Whom the canvas copies. His thought, His work, His life, His wondrous personality, all is portrayed for you with boldness of outline, with warmth of colour, with vividness of detail, until He stands before your very eyes, not as the dim memory of a remote past, but as a real and living Person. It has been most truly said that "in the whole compass of recorded history there exists no such wealth of materials for the knowledge of any individual as can compare with that which we have in the Gospels for the knowledge of our Lord." And the rest of the New Testament serves but to deepen that impression, and to add to the completeness of the portrait. Apostolic letter, missionary narrative, and inspired Apocalypse, each tells us something more of the revelation of God through Christ. Here are presented to us, from many varied points of view, all the fundamental facts of Christianity; here are

plain and well-trodden ways to that knowledge of God which we seek.[1]

And what of the Old Testament? If the New Testament is so important, can the Old Testament be dispensed with? By no means. To read the New Testament and ignore the Old, is as if a botanist should study the flower and take no account of the stem and roots; it is as if a geographer should describe the broad river in the valley without any reference to the watershed whence it sprang or the mountain streams that feed it. "The man of God" who would be "himself complete and perfectly equipped for every good work"[2] cannot afford to leave neglected any of the manifold riches in his Divine library.

We are not concerned now with any of the debated questions of criticism and inspiration; some of these we shall hope to examine in a subsequent chapter. We are simply examining the broad indisputable facts which lie at the base of all Old Testament Bible-study. Here, for instance, is one such fact. The Old Testament is a record of the beginning and the growth of a revelation of God which reached its climax in Jesus Christ.

[1] What has here been said proceeds on the assumption that the Gospels are genuine historical documents. Those who are acquainted with the broad results of modern criticism will agree that the assumption is justified. While many minor points remain for settlement, it is not too much to say that as far as the Gospels are concerned the battle of criticism in its main issue has been fought and won, and the Gospels are now admitted, by impartial critics, to be substantially true. Some historians have claimed, not without justification, that there are no documents in the world for whose historicity so much may be said. [2] 2 Tim. iii. 17.

If Christianity is Christ, then the Christian, as he learns to know Christ, will also learn to share Christ's sense of God, and to regard the world from Christ's point of view. To the teaching of this lesson the Old Testament is essential. There, in the Old Testament, is the picture of God at work from the beginning; God as maker and ruler of the universe; God leading man on step by step to a higher knowledge of Himself; choosing and fashioning a nation to be the agent of His purposes, the trustee of His revelation; controlling and directing world movements and world forces so that they shall minister to the accomplishment of His ends. And as each page of His revelation is unfolded, it leaves a sense of something more to come; it hints of another page one day to be disclosed, in bold type and unveiled language, written large for all the world to see and understand. The Old Testament is instinct with the thought of an as yet unrevealed Interpreter of God to men; it throbs with expectation of a coming day when a Man shall appear on earth, in whom men shall see God. Indeed the chief significance of the whole Old Testament, for Christ as well as for His Apostles, is its revelation of the Son of God. "These (the Scriptures) are they which bear witness of Me." [1] "Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." [2]

Furthermore, on man's side, the Old Testament is a unique record of a developing religious experience. It contains biographies and autobiographies

[1] John v. 39. [2] Luke xxiv. 27; *cf.* also xxiv. 45–47.

of men who responded to the Divine revelation and thus learnt to know God. It has recorded the effect of that knowledge on their lives; it has preserved for us their prayers, their meditations, their faith, their work, their hopes, their fears, their failures, their outlook, and their purposes. Such a record forms a classic, a model, for the spiritual life of all subsequent ages. And there is here something even more than the lessons of spiritual history. The experiences of these saints of old form a medium through which God speaks to man to-day. In the page which tells their story we are meant to hear, and in point of fact do hear, the voice of the living God speaking to our own hearts and lives.

But the permanent religious value of the Old Testament is finally and fully guaranteed by the fact that it was Christ's own Bible. He left to His Church, as a perpetual legacy, His profound confidence in the Scriptures. The importance of this fact for us cannot well be exaggerated. It supplies a weighty *a fortiori* reason for studying the Old Testament in order to strengthen and develop our individual spiritual life. If the one Perfect Man found in that Book nourishment for His own inner life of communion with His Father, can we sinners afford to do without it?

From what has been already said it will be evident that Bible study is an essential factor in personal spiritual growth. This is a subject on which a volume might be written, but we can only briefly note here one or two points which merit special emphasis. In the first place, an increasing knowledge of Christ depends absolutely on a patient

and painstaking study of the Bible.[1] As we saw in Chapter II, communion between God and man involves a mutual self-revelation which is indispensable even in human friendships. If you wish to know intimately and to come to love someone whose character you already respect and admire, you must somehow spend time in his presence, you must find out what he is thinking about, you must discover his point of view on all manner of questions. And if you would explore the meaning of friendship with Christ, you must search in your Bible for the unfolding of His personality. "How can we know what Christ likes without it? How can we learn what is distasteful to Him without it? How shall we know what kind of men His friends are without it? We never expect to have any real personal knowledge of a man about whose life and actions we are profoundly ignorant, and we cannot expect to have any knowledge of Christ unless we have learnt from His own word not only what He was to His disciples, but what He has been to man ever since his creation."[2] It is one thing to read the Bible because it is a literary masterpiece; it is quite another thing to study it in order to find out what Christ is doing now, what He thinks of our modern life, and what His purposes are for this world in which we live.

Further, it is impossible to maintain a high level of Christian ideals without constant Bible study. No man can attain proficiency in anything without

[1] *Cf.* above, p. 59, where this fact was noticed in a somewhat different connection.

[2] Walpole, *Vital Religion*, p. 41.

a standard to work by. The author, the painter, the craftsman will produce poor stuff if they have no ideal outside and above them. And the Christian's aim, if he ignore his Bible, will always be slipping down to the level of the world around him. Take, for instance, the meaning of discipleship. There is a tendency in every age, and not least in our own, to water down its plain meaning, to find an escape from its exacting demands. This tendency can only be combated by a resolute return to Christ's own teaching on the subject of discipleship. We may think our discipleship good enough till we re-test it by Christ's own standard,[1] we may be quite complacent about our Christian service until we are brought up sharp by, say, the parable of the Good Samaritan.[2]

Once again, regular Bible study has the most searching and illuminating effect on life and conduct. The Bible acts as a mirror in which the true self is revealed. Those comfortable illusions as to one's own goodness vanish like a pricked bubble when brought in contact with the Bible. Bible study produces an atmosphere where pride and complacency find it hard to breathe. The Bible is a book that knows no compromise; in the face of a dangerous modern tendency it still proclaims the sinfulness of sin. The Bible is the referee of conscience; it is the final guide to the Christian man as to matters of right and wrong, and on the debatable ground between. It is the

[1] *Cf.* for example, Matt. v. 3–12; xi. 29; xvi. 24–26; Mark x. 21–25.

[2] Luke x. 25–37; *cf.* also Matt. v. 38–48; Mark x. 43–45.

last word in ethics; and, what no ethical philosophy has ever done, it can tell a man, not only what goodness is, but also how he may attain it.

As a final instance of the value of Bible study, it may be pointed out that a knowledge of the Bible provides a much-needed corrective of incomplete, exaggerated, or false religious ideas. This is a broad statement which, if we should attempt to develop its various implications, would take us far beyond the scope of the present chapter. It is a statement which the reader can test for himself if he likes to examine into the history of Christian doctrine from the earliest centuries onwards. No one will deny that our own day is conspicuous for much unbalanced thought and wild speculation which parade under a Christian guise. Movements arise and flourish which, on investigation, turn out to be at once the product and the refuge of a mental tendency which likes to pick and choose from the Christian faith that which suits it and leave the rest. But this operation can only be accomplished by ignoring the one authoritative standard of the Christian faith, which is the Bible.

I propose to close this chapter with a few practical and even homely suggestions on the means and methods of Bible study.

(i) In the first place, use the Bible. It is no good postponing its actual *use* until its various literary problems have been solved. "As General Gordon used to say, 'the chief proof that the Bible is good food is the eating of it.' Chemical investigation into the quality and consistent parts of a

wheaten loaf has its needful place, no doubt, but the analyst's household may starve, if they hesitate to feed upon it until the process has been completed to his entire satisfaction." [1] And, further, do not allow books about the Bible, however suggestive, or devotional books, however inspiring, to take the place of the Bible itself.

(ii) Read it, not just here and there, but continuously. Have some plan by means of which, whether slowly or rapidly, you will cover the whole ground.[2]

(iii) Use various methods of study. Make a rapid survey of a whole book, noting its main argument and its leading ideas. Or select a chapter, or paragraph, or verse, and dig as deep as you can go. Or take some large topic or doctrine and trace it through a book or through several books. Do not be a slave to any one method.

(iv) Meditate. Give the word a chance to work. Ponder the passage or the verse, turn it over and over in your mind, that it may root itself in the fibres of your being.

(v) Bring to your Bible reading a receptive, child-like spirit. As Huxley once wrote to Charles Kingsley, speaking of the study of Science, "Sit down before the fact as a little child, be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly whenever and to whatever end nature

[1] Harrington Lees, *The Joy of Bible Study*, p. 11.

[2] There are published several Bible-reading cards or calendars, with a portion of Scripture for reading each day of the year.

leads, or you shall learn nothing. . . ." That advice is as important for the Bible student as for the scientist.

(vi) Let a daily time be set apart for Bible study. Let it be a time when your mind is fresh and your faculties alert, a state which for most people is best attained in the early morning. Moreover, let the time be regular, sufficient, and unhurried.

(vii) Use pen and paper. Record, for your own benefits, the results of your reading. Make a note of lessons learnt, of ideas suggested. The practice will both clarify your thought and aid your memory. Besides, that which a man thinks out for himself is worth far more to him than undigested masses of information poured into him from outside.

(viii) Lastly, as to Versions and Commentaries. It is worth while sacrificing both sentiment and literary considerations for the sake of an accurate translation. The translation of 1611 (the Authorized Version) is indeed majestically beautiful; but there are passages where no beauty of style can atone for failure to represent the original. From this point of view the Revised Version is a considerable improvement on the Authorized; and, for those who are ignorant of Greek, Weymouth's or Moffatt's versions of the New Testament (in modern English) are simply invaluable.[1] The constant or occasional use of a modern version is advisable for another reason also. For many people

[1] For instance, read in the A.V. or R.V. the difficult and often obscure English of 2 Corinthians, and then read the same Epistle in Weymouth of Moffatt. The difference is remarkable.

one of the greatest difficulties of Bible study is the sheer familiarity of what they read. The well-known words catch the eyes or strike upon the ear and penetrate no further. It is just here that the modern version is so helpful; it enables the words to strike fresh upon the mind.

Commentaries should be used sparingly and with discretion. It defeats the aim of Bible study if the student flies to a commentary as soon as he reaches anything that he cannot immediately understand. "It is not desirable to read the Bible through another man's spectacles. We can best feel the freshness and force of it when we look straight at it without any media between the reader and the sacred page."[1] At the same time, within certain limits, a commentary is not only useful, but essential. (i) It enables the reader—and this is important—to recover the atmosphere of the book which he is studying. It recreates for him, as far as possible, the original circumstances in which the book was written; the personality of the writer, his reasons for writing, the people for whom he wrote, the times in which he lived, and so on. In this way the book will become a living book. (ii) By the commentary's help he can untie knots which, after prolonged and honest effort, he finds too much for his own skill.

Bibliographical Note

Of the many excellent books published in recent

[1] Adeney, *How to Read the Bible*, p. 26.

years on the Bible and Bible Study the following can be recommended :—

The Bible, its Nature and its Inspiration : Edward Grubb. (Swarthmore Press.)
The Making and Meaning of the Bible : G. Barclay. (S.C.M.)
The Meaning of the Old Testament : Hugh Martin. (S.C.M.)
The Literature of the Old Testament : G. F. Moore. (Home University Library.)
Everyman's Story of the Old Testament : A. Nairne. (Mowbrays.)
Problems of the New Testament To-day : R. H. Malden. (Oxford Press.)
The Making of the New Testament : B. W. Bacon. (Home University Library.)
Vital Forces of the Early Church : Kennedy. (S.C.M.)
A First-Century Letter (1 Corinthians) : N. Micklem. (S.C.M.)
A Short History of our Religion : D. C. Somervel. (G. Bell & Sons.)

The Student Christian Movement publishes a number of books for Bible Study, and reference to their list is recommended.

CHAPTER V

THE REDEMPTION OF PERSONALITY

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"Though all of us is a temple for Him, yet the heart is the choir, where He properly sitteth."—BAYNE.

"Not even Christ Himself
Can save man else than as He holds man's soul;
And therefore did He come into our flesh
As some wise hunter creeping on his knees
With a torch, into the blackness of some cave,
To face and quell the beast there,—take the soul,
And so possess the whole man, body and soul."

E. B. BROWNING.

"*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him. . . .*"—Revelation iii. 20.

MYSTICISM is a word that has sometimes got into bad odour. Mystics are sometimes eccentric people, and occasionally degenerate into mere visionaries. And the plain man tends to become impatient and annoyed with types of religion which he considers to be vague and dreamy and unpractical.

Now, it is as well to recognize the fact that the New Testament is full of mysticism. St. Paul was one of the greatest of the mystics. But he was, if I may use the paradoxical expression, a very practical mystic. He preached a mysticism, not for the initiated few, but for the unlettered multi-

tude. Here is a group of expressions which he frequently uses in his letters:—"*In* Christ," "Christ *in* me," "Christ *in* you." He writes to the Colossian Christians that "Your life is hidden with Christ *in* God."[1] His prayer for the Christians at Ephesus is "that Christ may make His home *in your hearts* through your faith."[2] Now the practical man might suggest that in using such language the writer is wandering off into a region that is shadowy, mystical, unreal; or else that he is employing exaggerated and metaphorical expressions which cannot be related to the plain facts of life. But a closer study of St. Paul's teaching will show such a criticism to be unfounded. St. Paul was the last man to indulge in meaningless metaphor. Moreover, when he speaks of Christ being *in* a man, he is describing the everyday experience of an ordinary Christian. This is no esoteric cult for a favoured few; it is the natural yet wonderful result for every man who discovers Christ. "I pray that Christ may make His home in your heart." Do you call yourself a Christian? In that case, says St. Paul, the Spirit of Christ will enter, if you will let Him, and inhabit the innermost shrine of your heart. He will reside in the secret places of your personality. And that not as occasional visitor, but as rightful and permanent Master. This is no advanced teaching for a higher class. It is elementary, fundamental. "Do ye not know," writes the Apostle to the Corinthians, "that Jesus Christ *is in you*, except ye be counterfeits?"[3]

[1] Col. iii. 3. [2] Eph. iii. 17. [3] 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

It is the purpose of the present chapter to take this thought of Christ's indwelling and study its relation to the deeper parts of man's being. Recent investigation has thrown much light on the nature and working of the human mind.[1] Amidst much that is obscure, this at least seems fairly clear, that a large part of our personality lies outside the region of our immediate consciousness. There are vast mental stores sunk in those subterranean depths which seldom or never reach the level of our conscious thought. "Buried below the surface in the dim recesses of the mind is all that we have ever learnt, or seen, or heard, all the experiences through which we have passed, much that we have not thought of for many years, and perhaps may never think of in this world, but still there, ready to be called up into consciousness by something that recalls it to our memory, or brought above the threshold by driving a shaft into it through such methods as crystal-gazing or hypnotism."[2] Our automatic actions show how large a part this subconscious self plays in ordinary life. There are countless little actions in everyday life that we all perform automatically. We walk upstairs, hang up

[1] No attempt is made in this chapter to deal with the newer findings of psychology and their relation to Christian experience. The reader is referred to the two excellent books, F. R. Barry's *Christianity and Psychology*, and T. W. Pym's *Psychology and the Christian Life;* and reference may be permitted to the writer's *Every-day Religion*, chap. ix. The present chapter is concerned with one point only: that the Spirit of God can enter and "indwell" the *whole* of human personality.

[2] Peake, *Christianity: its Nature and its Truth*, p. 70, and *cf.* p. 71 for the thought of the following paragraph.

our coats, wash our hands, and do all such things, almost invariably without any conscious thought. The skilful pianist does not think of every note he strikes, nor the oarsman of every stroke he rows, nor the athlete of every stride he takes. Fingers, arms, and legs work automatically; they obey the commands of the brain, but those commands are issued directly, and get themselves fulfilled without the aid of consciousness. Indeed, were it necessary that we should think out afresh every common action each time we perform it, our minds would certainly give way under the strain, and the world would rapidly be full of raving lunatics. So powerful and so extensive is that realm which we call sub-consciousness.

Here is another fact about our sub-consciousness, a fact which is almost frightening when we think out all that it implies. It is this. The character of this reservoir of personality is largely determined by all the so-called little things that we say and hear and think and do. Nothing goes unrecorded. Everything makes its impression on that wonderfully delicate receiver. Each choice, each action, each habit plays its part in fixing the character of that hidden, inner personality. It is a process that never stops. It is a work that has no respite. Not for an hour can we keep that hand from writing on that tablet, any more than we can hold back the waves from their tireless beating on the shore. And it is the careless thought and the empty hour, no less than the strenuous work and sustained effort, that leave their mark. None can measure the result of those silent times, those "interior conversa-

tions," when the soul is fashioning its own temple with its own hands according to its own fancy. At those moments when the mind is left to itself, what sort of direction does it take? What path does it choose to wander down? What sort of thoughts does it select and cultivate? The gallery of the imagination is the usual resort of the unoccupied mind. What pictures have we hanging there? And which are the ones that hang on the line and to which we habitually return? Each visit to that gallery leaves its mark upon our inner self. Every picture records its reflection on the mind that seeks it out. To every impression the sensitive personality responds. It may be stained or purified; it may be degraded or ennobled; the one thing it cannot do is to remain unchanged.

Moreover, our real character is the character of this inner personality. It is largely invisible to other men, it is often veiled even from ourselves. So long as we are in full possession of our will-power, we may be able to direct, control, and even to a certain extent to hide, the tendency of those inner forces. But in times of weakness or illness, when the will-power lessens or fails completely, what then? Why then we stand revealed as we are; the draperies drop off and the soul is seen in all its nakedness. There is a remarkable passage in Gairdner's Life of D. M. Thornton—a name of imperishable fame in the student and missionary world—describing how, during his last delirium, Thornton unwittingly revealed the inner recesses of his soul and displayed the unsullied picture of a heart wholly set upon

God and His kingdom. "What, then, were the words which, throughout that livelong night, were poured forth before that tribunal? Not one syllable that was unworthy of his high calling and his sacred profession; nay, not a syllable—if we except a few thoughtful inquiries for his wife, his child, his family at home, his nurses—that was not about that one grand passion of his life—The Work. That passion held him even to the last moments." [1] Such a test may come to any of us. What would that test show? What would men see, what does God see, at an unveiling of our real personality? While all this is true, and tremendously true, I do not wish, by a too emphatic statement of its truth, to suggest that we are wholly responsible for all the contents of our subconsciousness. It is, I think, quite clear that we are not. It may be that the main features of the "under" self are fashioned by the conscious self. At the same time much must steal down into those lower regions through the avenues of sight and sound, which the sentinel of consciousness does not mark or cannot stop. While the outpourings of unconsciousness may generally reveal the real self, they do, on occasion, display strange and fantastic features which are in no sense representative of the true personality. But this qualification does not affect the main argument of this chapter, that the greater part of our real selves lies below the surface, yet has its character determined from the higher level of consciousness.

[1] *D. M. Thornton: A Study in Missionary Ideals and Methods*, by the Rev. W. H. T. Gairdner, p. 276.

As we stand gazing down into the unplumbed depths of our own personality, we are appalled at the awful potentialities of evil that lurk therein. We are dismayed to realize how weak is our will, how little control we have over those silent, subterranean forces. Dismayed we may be, but we have no right to despair. For it is just here that the Christ enters with a wonderful message of hope. "I will come in to him." [1] "Abide in Me, and I in you." [2] "If any man love Me . . . My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make our home with him." [3] "The Spirit of God dwelleth in you." [4]

There are no depths of personality that Christ by His Spirit cannot fathom and influence. There are no tracts of those sub-conscious regions where He cannot tread. Provided only that we are willing, He will enter in, and bring with Him a fresh and cleaner atmosphere that will penetrate to every corner. He will control those ungoverned forces, not as by magic or hypnotism, but by charging the calcined fibres of our will with the mystic current of His own. He will guard the threshold of that dim and dark recess, and turn aside the evil before it gets a footing. Those large spaces, empty and waste, He will fill with sweetness and purity and light, till the wilderness shall

[1] Rev. iii. 20. [2] John xv. 4. [3] John xiv. 23.

[4] 1 Cor. iii. 16. Such passages are not purely metaphorical. "We are justified in saying that there is a reality corresponding to the language which speaks of Divine indwelling. And the tendency of thought at present is rather to strengthen than to weaken the sense of this reality."—W. Sanday, *Christologies: Ancient and Modern*, p. 152.

blossom as the rose. Let Christ govern here, at the very centre; and then, by all the laws of psychology, our Christian life shall cease to be a thing of forced choice and laboured virtue, and shall become instead something instinctive, natural, spontaneous. It is one thing to know Christ after the flesh, to revere His ideals, to learn from His teaching; it is something quite other to enthrone Him as Lord of the heart, to become so joined with Him in spiritual union as to find that "closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

And is such deep, mystic experience unheard of, unreasonable? Assuredly not. Look at the analogy of human relationships. Think of the closeness of the bond between two kindred personalities. Think of the power of love to penetrate, to understand, to influence, to transform. On the surface, men seem to be sharply separated individuals, but "there is evidence of mysterious connections below the reach of consciousness; the separating wall of personality seems built on arches." [1]

Now, if such can be the influence of man on man, with all the limitations of sin and time and space, what may not be the influence of the Spirit of God on the depths of human personality, acting without these limitations? The thought opens up a wonderful vista of undreamed possibilities for lives where God is allowed to have free course. The condition is of course essential. God will never thrust Himself into our personality, unwelcomed and uninvited. We on our side must lift

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, vol. i. p. 165.

the latch and ask Him to pass over the threshold. If His Spirit is to fill and permeate the deep places of our being, He must be asked, and allowed, to enter through the door of consciousness. Once there, He will leaven, and mould, and transform, on a scale far out of proportion to the feebleness of our conscious desires. But we must give Him the freedom of our personality. We must learn how to give a Christ-ward bent to all our powers of imagination, of "suggestion," of will. If we can do that, patiently, and sincerely, then we have every right to expect the Spirit of Jesus to fill our whole being down to the very bottom of its sub-conscious depths. What this Divine filling might mean for life and service God knows, and we may faintly guess.

CHAPTER VI

THE HIGHEST WORK

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"When we think about prayer, we think, as a rule, instinctively of its limitations; the mind of Christ seemed always to be occupied with its possibilities."—J. H. OLDHAM.

"If there should arise one utterly believing man, the history of the world would be changed."

"Orare est laborare."

THERE is a lesson which the Christian Church is slowly and painfully learning. It is that the highest service a man can render to his fellow-man is to pray for him. Until a man has learnt to intercede, he is not much use to the Kingdom of God. Work backed up by prayer is too often the practice, if not the ideal, of the Church. If the world is to be won, that order must be reversed, and the Church learn to depend on prayer backed up by work. Christian work that thinks and plans and bustles and toils, but forgets to pray, is an almost pathetic spectacle. "Men who desert their prayers in order to get more quickly to what they fondly call work, are like a stoker on a liner, who should put out his furnace fires and try to tow the ship himself." Yet it is not altogether surprising that great men of prayer are few and far between. To become a man of prayer is to run

clean counter to the spirit of the age. The Western world glories in the strenuous life. It bows down to the idols of energy and force. What does it want with mystics and dreamers who waste their time in prayer? Yet, if Christianity be true, it will probably turn out in the end that the dreamers have *done* more than the hustlers. It is they who make the world a better place, for it is they who have learnt to set in motion that Power which makes for righteousness.

It is important to realize that prayer, in the sense in which we are now considering it, is something far more than a subjective spiritual exercise. According to the teaching of Christ, and according to the witness of human experience, prayer is a force which achieves objective results. It actually causes things to happen which otherwise would not happen. The Biblical theory of prayer is that it is a force at work. "Very effectual in its working is the prayer of a righteous man."[1] This is a fact of tremendous significance. Some of its further meanings we shall presently attempt to analyze. For the present let us note the two main foundations for the statement that prayer is a working force. In the first place, it is indisputable that Christ Himself attached the greatest importance to intercessory prayer. He not only taught men to pray, but He Himself was dependent on prayer.[2] This dependence was a part of His real humanity. His prayers were not only the medium of a holy intercourse, they were also the

[1] James v. 16.

[2] *Cf.* Heb. v. 7, and constant references in the Gospels.

expression of a definite sense of want. It would appear from the records that the power which He wielded in the physical as in the spiritual world was purchased by prayer. That power seems to have been given Him by His Father, as He needed it, and as He asked for it. For Him prayer was the real battlefield of life. He fought His fight and won the victory in the secret place, and then moved among men with the calm power which belongs to one who is already conqueror.[1] In view of His own experience, it is not to be wondered at that in His teaching He laid such stress on the importance of prayer. He was at pains to make His disciples understand that in prayer they are given a power

> "Which moves the Hand which moves the world
> To bring salvation down."

It is a subject on which He used the very plainest language; He seemed anxious to prevent any possibility of men misconceiving His words. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."[2] "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My Name,

[1] See, for instance, John xi. 41, 42. It is clear from the narrative that the raising of Lazarus was in answer to prayer. It is also clear that the result was already certain as soon as Christ had prayed (in secret), and before He reached the tomb. See also John xvii., which is one long intercessory prayer.

[2] Luke xi. 9, 10.

that will I do."[1] "The daring sayings of Jesus regarding the power of faith and of prayer entitle, or rather compel, us to attribute to man a sovereignty over the world exercised by faith. Everything is possible for the man who can say with authority to a mountain, 'Be thou removed and cast into the sea.'"[2]

The other immediate point to notice is this. Prevailing prayer is an indisputable fact of Christian experience. Explain it how you will, the fact remains. Ever since God first revealed Himself as a God to Whom man may speak, and especially since Christ taught that God is Father, men have prayed, and prayer has been answered.[3] Each country tells the same tale. Trace the causes of the great Christian movements in history; search into the story of foreign missions; examine the records of the heroes of Christian enterprise—such men, to take a few names almost at random, as Raymund Lull, John Wesley, Henry Martyn, Shaftesbury, George Müller, Hudson Taylor—interrogate the men who to-day are doing yeoman service in the Kingdom of God, and you will find that in all cases the secret of success is the same, and that is believing, persistent, expectant prayer.

In spite of our Lord's teaching, and the seemingly clear witness of experience, not a few are held

[1] John xiv. 13, 14. *Cf.* also Luke xi. 1–8 (parable of the Friend at Midnight), Luke xviii. 1–8 (parable of the Unjust Judge).

[2] Arthur Titius.

[3] It is a noteworthy fact that there are 657 definite requests for prayer in the Bible, not including the Psalms, and 454 definitely recorded answers. For these figures the present writer is indebted to Mr. R. P. Wilder.

back from intercessory prayer by the very real intellectual difficulties to which it gives rise. Is such prayer reasonable? Is it thinkable that I can really affect a man's life, by praying for him? Is it conceivable that the prayer of a weak, finite, sinful man, can influence the purposes of the unchanging God? Is there room for prayer in a universe governed by immutable laws? Let it be said at once that no complete and final answer has yet been found, or is likely to be found, to these questions. Prayer is a mystery which, in this world at least, we shall never wholly fathom. But while it is not possible to demonstrate the working of prayer as if it was a mathematical sum, we can at least note certain facts about God and man and the universe which are sufficient to show that prayer is reasonable.

First of all, let it be clearly realized that God is free in His own universe. This is important. Of recent years we have become so obsessed with the thought of the iron sequences of physical law, that we have almost forgotten the fact that God is free. He is not bound down to any particular series of sequences. He is free, within whatever limits (in any case self-imposed) His creation of mankind involve, to carry out His plans by whatever chain of causation He may think best. And He has also, within certain limits, given freedom to man.[1]

If, then, God is not irrevocably tied to particular modes of action, and if man is a free agent, it becomes conceivable that God, although His pur-

[1] We assume here, in spite of the determinists, that human freedom is real and not merely apparent.

poses are fixed, has left room for man's co-operation in carrying them out. No doubt He foresees the final goal, but it would seem that He leaves undecided the intermediate steps which lead there. No doubt also He could, if He so willed, dispense altogether with human co-operation; but in point of fact, it appears that, in certain cases at least, He waits for man's willingness, that is to say, He waits for man of his own accord to ask Him before He moves on to the accomplishment of His ends. To put it in other words, "When a heart goes out to the infinite Spirit of God in prayer, an actual force is exerted, for which God makes allowance, to which He can give effect, which He expects and welcomes as a contribution to the activity in which He is engaged. He made us free to act in order that we might act with Him. He counts our prayers as part of the sum total of energies."[1] God waiting for man's willingness—this would seem to be the ultimate *raison d'être* of intercessory prayer. The negative side is often obvious: God will not force man's will, He will not compel the sinner to become the saint. But the positive side is equally true. There is a man, a man perhaps whom I know well, whose heart is wholly unresponsive to the love of God. May it not be that *my willingness* is an essential factor in the process of that man's finding God? There may be, there doubtless are, other factors; but it is more than possible that my willingness, my intense desire towards God for him, will just turn the scale. It is not that I have to

[1] R. F. Horton, Article on "Intercession," in the *Student World*, January, 1910, p. 21.

persuade God to be gracious to him—that is unthinkable; but it is quite conceivable that my passionate longing for him, my faith going out to God on his behalf, and, as it were, in his stead, will just pull down the last barrier and the way shall lie open for God to enter into his life. Or there is a country, a nation, lying in the darkness of ignorance of God. Perhaps God *cannot* fulfil His purpose of Love for that nation until I, and another, and another, have learnt to will His purpose there with tremendous intensity. There is a sense in which Christendom must supply a vicarious willingness for heathendom. Is it too much to say that the world will have to wait for God until the Church has learnt what it means to pray? "Ye shall ask what ye will (it is a strong word—"resolve," "eagerly wish"), and it shall be done for you."[1] In other words, when you have learnt to *will* what God wills, the thing shall be done.

All this may certainly be mysterious, but it cannot justly be called a violation of the Divine order. Prayer only becomes illogical and impossible when you deny the freedom of God or of man or of both. Given this freedom—and most of the facts of life and nature go to show it—then prayer is reasonable. If a man prays with faith, and brings healing to someone diseased, or the light of God to someone in the darkness of sin, that is no breaking of a law of the universe, it is only a "determination of certain forces in the general working of the universe by the exercise of a power which God Himself has made and allowed for." There

[1] John xv. 7.

are, moreover, experiences in human life which throw light on the working of prayer. There is, for instance, the fact of telepathy. Recent psychological research is on the eve of establishing—some would say, has established—the reality of telepathic communication. On the surface we may seem to be sharply separated individuals, but, as we saw in the last chapter, "there is evidence of mysterious connections below the reach of consciousness, the separating wall of personality seems built on arches."[1] And these connections down below the surface are quite independent of physical proximity. "When you get down beneath the surface of your own self, it is a most mysterious truth; you come into contact with other people there; you touch the wires of communication which connect you with people far away, you actually influence the thought and feeling of persons on the other side of the globe. It is one of the mysterious facts of modern psychology, but it is indisputable; and it reveals the truth which we have held all along, that by praying for people we directly help them; that if you give yourself to prayer for a person, we will say, in the Mission-field, the very act of prayer brings you to the point where telepathic communication is carried right through to the soul far away; and that fact, which is familiar to us all, is becoming a scientific fact, a psychological fact established by enquiry, experiment, and verification."[2]

With regard to the reasonableness of prayer, there is one other fact, which, for anyone who

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, vol. i. p. 165.
[2] R. F. Horton, *Prayer and the Divine Source of Power*, p. 6.

accepts the truth of the Christian revelation, is convincing. That fact is the Fatherhood of God. Granted that God is Father, then it is not only reasonable to pray to Him, but it would be utterly irrational not to do so. When Christ in His teaching laid such emphasis on the Fatherhood of God, He must have intended His listeners to interpret His meaning in the light of all that is highest and best in human experience. No human fatherhood or sonship is complete without frank and trustful intercourse; on the one side confidence in asking, on the other love and wisdom in giving. And such intercourse reaches its highest ideal when the son so learns to know his father's character that he only asks for that which the father is delighted to give. The Divine Fatherhood may well mean much more than this, but it can hardly mean less. If God is Father, then surely He must be even more ready to hear than we to pray. It must—let us say it reverently—be a delight to Him when His children begin to show an understanding of His purposes, and come and plead with Him for their accomplishment.

We may pass on now to examine briefly some of the conditions of prevailing intercession, conditions laid down by our Lord, and verified by human experience.

(i) The first and most fundamental of these conditions is prayer in "the name of Jesus." "Whatsoever ye shall ask *in My Name*, that will I do. . . ." [1] What exactly did Christ mean by this statement? The Biblical usage of the word *name* will make this clear. In the Old Testament,

[1] John xiv. 13; *cf.* also xv. 16, xvi. 23, 24

the " name of Jehovah " is used as a concise expression for the revealed character of God.[1] Similarly in the New Testament the " name of Jesus " briefly sums up His personality as made known. In fact the " name of Jesus " is almost identical with the " person of Jesus." Therefore to pray " in the name of Jesus " means to pray " in the person of Jesus." And to pray in the person of Jesus means that the motive and the object of the intercessor will be inspired by contact with Christ's personality. This contact of personalities, ours with Christ's, we have already seen to be the fundamental thing in living a Christian life. And this contact is to govern all thought and action, including prayer. So then prayer " in the name of Jesus " does not mean merely tacking on a pious formula to the end of every petition. It does not even involve the actual speaking of the Name. What it does involve is a close heart-to-heart sympathy with the Person for Whom the Name stands : loving what He loves, willing what He wills, sharing His thought of God and His purposes for the world.

To pray " in the name of Jesus " is to pray in accordance with the will of God, which is an indispensable condition of right praying. In the recorded prayers of our Lord Himself there always sounds this note of perfect harmony with His Father's will. Such harmony is a *sine quâ non* of all true intercession. And just in so far as a man is " in Christ," enjoying that fellowship of which we spoke in the first chapters, so far will his thought and prayer be

[1] *Cf.* Hastings. *Dictionary of the Bible*, art. " Name," vol. iii. pp. 478 ff.

in line with the will of God. Moreover, be it remembered that praying for God's will to be done is not the mere passive acceptance of something already finished; rather is it the concentrated passion to *get* that will done on earth, to see it translated from purpose into achievement. The third petition of the Lord's Prayer implies an act, not of resignation, but of strenuous spiritual energy.

The first condition, of praying in the name of Jesus, strictly speaking includes all the conditions of prevailing prayer, in that no prayer can conceivably prevail which is out of harmony with the mind of Christ. Prayer is ultimately based on character, and a Christ-like character comes, as we have already seen, only through the contagion of Christ's personality. Let no man think he can learn to pray anywhere else than in the School of Christ. With this proviso, we may proceed to examine some of the other conditions of prayer which, although really inherent in the first condition, may for convenience sake be studied separately.

(ii) It seems an obvious thing to say that faith in God is an indispensable condition of effective prayer. Yet if ever there was a time when it was necessary to reassert the importance of this condition it is to-day. There are plenty who pray, but there are few who pray with the kind of faith which Christ evidently intended men to have. We only half believe that "God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him."[1] We limit God by the poverty of our expectations; we measure what He is likely to do by the dwarfed

[1] Heb. xi. 6.

human standard of what we like to call reasonable probability. "The natural and reverent way of approaching God is not to settle beforehand the limit of His power, not to conclude that He can only grant this or that request, but to take Christ at His word, to tell God everything, to come as a little child to a Father."[1] We must somehow, if we would become efficient intercessors, recover Christ's sense of what God is, and of what God will and can do. We must learn to expect according to the measure revealed by the faith and achievement of Jesus of Nazareth. He lived by, and acted upon, the conviction that God is dependable. Prayer for us as for Him, is gloriously rational, because God is absolutely dependable. "Prayer *always* has an answer, because we can always depend upon the character of God."[2] Therefore, faith is justified.

(iii) Another condition on which Christ laid great stress was *persistency* in prayer. Two of the most striking of His parables, those of the Friend at Midnight[3] and the Unjust Judge,[4] were spoken to illustrate the extreme importance of persistency in prayer. In these parables our Lord takes some homely and almost sordid facts of human life to illustrate what He is at pains to teach—that where a single or half-hearted petition will fail, unflagging importunity will succeed. Says He in effect, because there is no answer, or because there appears to be no answer to your prayer, that is no reason at all to give up praying; on the contrary, it is a

[1] Forbes Robinson, *College and Ordination Addresses*, p. 9.
[2] J. H. Oldham. [3] Luke xi. 5–13. [4] Luke xviii. 1–8.

summons to you to redouble your efforts. Pray on to the end, and the answer will come somehow. It is impossible to avoid asking ourselves why Christ attached such importance to importunity in prayer. Quite obviously we cannot persuade God into giving that which He otherwise would not give; prayer is not a sort of battery to force God's will. The reason must be sought elsewhere. For one thing, as we have seen already, importunate intercession may be an important factor in another's redemption.[1] And two further suggestions may be offered. In the first place, persistency may be necessary in order that character may keep pace with prayer. Unwearying persistence in prayer may well be an essential factor in fitting me to receive that for which I plead. God delays to answer, not because He does not hear or does not love, but that He may thereby create the condition under which it shall be possible for Him to answer. The other suggestion is this. We are not in a position to judge as to the fruitlessness of prayers. The answer may come in a form quite different from that which we expected, so different indeed that for years it may remain unrecognized. Or we may never live to see the answer at all. So that in any case there is no excuse for abandoning our prayers. "Keep on asking . . . and ye shall receive." [2]

(iv) One other condition of intercession may be quite briefly noticed. It is the need of knowledge and sympathy and imagination. You set yourself perhaps to pray for God's Kingdom in China. But how can you pray with any effect if you know

[1] See above, p. 90. [2] Luke xi. 9. The tense is the present.

nothing of the local conditions—the general trend of national ideas and ideals, the local circumstances and atmosphere, the particular opportunities for or hindrances to Missionary work? Or you are praying for an individual. If your prayer is really to help him, you must somehow think yourself into his mind and his environment. Put yourself in his place; picture, so far as you can, his attitude and outlook; imagine to yourself his special temptations and possibilities. Seek from God a loving intuition into the deepest needs of his heart. Such divining sympathy will save you from praying at random.

(v) Lastly, it may not be superfluous to point out that success in intercession can only be attained through constant and painstaking practice. It is no easy thing to pray; prayer is in fact the most difficult and arduous work in which we can engage. The man who wants to pray is not miraculously exempted from the universal laws of human achievement; his faculty for prayer, like his ear for music, or his talent for painting, must be trained and developed. "We can," as has been truly said, "no more pray at will, without having carefully acquired the capacity, than we can perform on a musical instrument that we have never seen nor handled before."[1] We must be prepared for frequent failure and consequent dissatisfaction. But any time and pains are worth while if we may so fit ourselves to engage in this the highest work of all.

The modern world needs Christians who can

[1] Illingworth, *Christian Character*, p. 128.

pray. More men are needed of the spiritual fibre of the late Forbes Robinson, who, more perhaps than any of his generation, had learnt the secret of prevailing intercession. "It is," he once wrote, "worth while making any efforts, however desperate, to learn to pray." And again: "As I grow older I become more diffident, and now, often, when I desire the Truth to come home to any man, I say to myself, 'If I have him here he will spend half an hour with me. Instead, I will spend that half-hour in prayer for him.'"[1] If that tremendous belief in the power of prayer were as common as it is at present uncommon, the Church would move on more rapidly to the winning of the world.

"The weary ones had rest, the sad had joy
That day and wondered how—
The ploughman singing at his work had prayed,
Lord, bless them now.

Away in foreign fields they wondered how
Their simple word had power—
At home the Christians two or three had met
To pray an hour.

Yes, we are always wondering, wondering how!
Because we do not see
Someone—perhaps unknown and far away—
On bended knee."

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[1] Forbes Robinson, *Letters to his Friends*, p. 29.

CHAPTER VII

SERVICE

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SERVICE

"At all times God, the Lover of Man, clothes Himself with Man, to the attainment of the salvation of men."—CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA, *c.* 200 A.D.

"... We must share, if we would keep,
That good thing from above;
Ceasing to give, we cease to have—
Such is the law of Love."

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH.

"Cui servire regnare est."—ST. AUGUSTINE, *c.* 400 A.D.

LIFE cannot be lived in a vacuum. As St. Paul once said, "No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself."[1] There are no exceptions to that generalization. Whether we will or no, every day that passes sees us thrown into contact with our fellow-men, affecting our environment, influencing those who cross our path. Life is, inevitably and for every one, a motley heap of all sorts and kinds of relationships. And any serious view of life is obliged to face the question, What, if any, is to be the great and governing principle which shall determine the nature of these relationships? Christianity answers this question quite plainly. According to the rule of Christ, a

[1] Rom. xiv. 7.

man's relationship to his fellow-men shall be, above all else, one of *service*.

Let there be no mistake about it. The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and He took infinite pains to impress that ideal upon the first disciples, and through them on all who should afterwards believe on His Name. When, after the last supper, He girded Himself with a towel and proceeded to wash His disciples' feet, His action marked a new departure in human history. Up to that time the world had said, as the natural man still says, It is more blessed to receive than to give. Not so, says Christ. He who learns from Me will discover that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Not to be ministered unto, but to minister, is the mark of real greatness. "Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your servant; and whosoever would be first among you shall be bondservant of all." [1] "Whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's shall save it." [2]

This is one of the things in which the Christian and the non-Christian ideal stand in the sharpest contrast. The man of the world deems, and from his point of view justly enough, that he does his duty sufficiently if he loves those who love him, and serves those who would serve him. But the man who takes Christ's yoke upon him thereby lays himself under an infinitely wider obligation. His orders are, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, with all the far-reaching consequences for service which that command implies. A man once

[1] Mark x. 43, 44. [2] Mark viii. 35.

asked Christ for a definition of that obligation, perchance hoping that his neighbours might turn out to be few. Christ's answer was surprisingly and disappointingly inclusive. In the parable of the Good Samaritan,[1] He made it abundantly clear that the law of love knows neither exception nor limit.

This obligation of service is closely and logically connected with those other facts of the Christian life which we have already examined. If "salvation" is not merely a future thing,[2] neither is it in the least a selfish thing. A man is "saved" simply that he may serve. His faith is not a passport to a sheltered and private garden where, unmolested and irresponsible, he may enjoy a cloistered peace. It is a commission which thrusts him out on to life's highway, there to succour the tired and halting travellers. He has received a revelation from God that He may bring light to those who are walking in darkness. He has been rescued by Christ Himself that he may be free to loose the bond of others. He has drunk of the water of life that he may refresh those who are wandering in the thirsty desert. "The Christian religion, like the Christian character, is not a detached, isolated, self-sufficient possession, but a form of power, an application of strength to weakness, of sight to blindness, of the soul that has found the heights to the soul of the world below." [3]

It may be well, at this point, to emphasize the fact that the "service" owing from a Christian is

[1] Luke x. 25–37. [2] Compare above, p. 40.
[3] F. G. Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Christian Character*, p. 273.

not necessarily something which would be commonly regarded as "religious" at all. It is, in the first instance, a motive, an attitude, a point of view, a way of thinking and doing, that should characterize all his ordinary work and daily occupations. To be able, in some degree, to see God, to worship God, to express God, in his every-day labour, his family circle, his common relationships, is the heart and soul of a Christian's "service."[1] And, in the last resort, such lives are God's *media* for giving Himself to men.

It is one of the noteworthy features of God's government of the world, that human co-operation seems to be essential to the execution of His purposes. In the last chapter we observed the bearing of this fact on prayer. And it has an equally vital significance for service. God reaches men through men. No doubt He can, and occasionally does, make Himself known without any human medium whatsoever. But as a general rule His message goes through a human channel. The current of Divine Life has to flow over human transmitters. If this is so, the privilege and responsibility of the servant of God are immeasurable. To reflect God becomes the highest function of personality. Each man, with his own personality, has a separate work to do, a distinctive service to render. Other men cannot do the work for which you or I are responsible. Each has his own circle, each maintains relationships where others have no access; and it may well be that God is waiting for the vantage-ground of our personality

[1] The writer has tried to work this point out in detail in his book *Every-day Religion*.

in order to touch the lives we touch. We may not always be conscious of the process. But we may be quite sure that both unconscious and conscious influence depend directly on a deliberate willingness that our personality shall be at the disposal of the purposes of God.

It is fatally easy to acquiesce in a lower ideal of service. The good is often the enemy of the best. It is a common temptation to good men to rest content with service which is unselfish indeed, but which carries in it no distinctive revealing of the Master to Whom they belong. "To feed the hungry and clothe the naked is no small part of what Christ asks of His disciples; yet man cannot live by bread alone. . . . We are told on very high authority that you must make people comfortable before you can make them Christians; but it was not the way the Apostles went to work."[1] Philanthropy may be a promise of the Kingdom, but it is not necessarily an ambassador of the King. Organization may lay the pipes and build the reservoir, but all the work is fruitless until the living waters flow. Men need sympathy, help, advice, encouragement; but most of all they need Christ. On all sides men are hungry, weary, unsatisfied, for lack of the living Christ—

> "Bound who should conquer, slaves who should be kings,
> Hearing their one hope with an empty wonder,
> Sadly contented with a show of things."

And so they will be doomed to remain, unless and until Christ's disciples shall be faithful to their trust. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that

[1] J. H. F. Peile, *Ecclesia Discens*, pp. 278, 279.

hath not the Son of God hath not life." [1] This is an unqualified statement of the biggest fact within the ken of humanity. And a man must face this fact, with all its tremendous meaning, if he would be of use to Christ and His Kingdom. His service will depend on his conviction that Christ is indispensable to the human race and to every single individual member of it. He must face the sight of goodness better than his own and still believe it can never reach its fulness save in Christ. He must stand undismayed before the greatest mental power, and remember that the mind where Christ is not is marred by a fatal flaw. He must watch the life that seems so rich and strong and free, and realize that lameness and loss must come if Christ be absent. Those serve best whose life is based on the unwavering certainty that Christ wants men, and that men need Christ.

Suppose that a man has caught a vision of this ideal of service, that he longs not to hoard but to give what he has of Christ. What exactly is he to do? How is he to set about his task? He will remember, to start with, that to go on active service for Christ it is not necessary to become a clergyman or a missionary, nor need he display certain conventions of language or garb or demeanour. The less conventional or professional he is, the better service will he render. It is perfectly true that a great many more clergy and missionaries are badly wanted. But what is wanted even more are men and women of all professions and positions and occupations, who will carry the savour of Christ into all the relation-

[1] 1 John v. 12.

ships of their lives. A life that, by word or deed, compels men to think of Jesus Christ, in the home, in the office, in the lecture-room, in the street and on the train, at work and at play—that is the chief factor in the progress of the Kingdom of God. If the work of communicating Christ is to be left to the clergy or the "professional" Christian workers generally, then good-bye to the hope of winning the world. The witness of history is unmistakable here. No less an authority than Harnack has stated, "The cause of the marvellous growth of the early Church lay not in her apostles, apologists, or martyrs, but in the faithful daily life of the average common Christian."

It is not essential to become a Sunday-school teacher, or a "Social worker," or to teach or to speak in public at all. Such tasks are useful, but not the only channels of service. There need be no "professionalism" of any kind whatsoever. What *is* essential is the true spirit of service, the willingness to serve Christ for men's sake and to serve men for Christ's sake. Given that spirit, that temper which can inspire life's relationships with new meaning, the opportunities of service will follow in abundance. The problem of "Christian work" will suddenly become immensely simple. There is a characteristic anecdote of Mr. Spurgeon which relates that a man once came to him and asked him for some Church work. "What is your trade?" asked Mr. Spurgeon. "An engine-driver," was the reply. "Is the stoker a Christian?" "No." "Very well, then," said Mr. Spurgeon, "there's your Church work!"

If Christian service, then, is at once so simple and so complex, it is evidently erroneous to employ ordinary standards in attempting to gauge the importance of this or that "sphere" of Christianity. The clerk in his store may well have as great a work before him as the evangelist in the heathen land, or the missionary secretary in his office. The invalid on a sick bed may contribute as much to the Kingdom as the famous preacher in his pulpit. The soldier in his barracks, the sailor on his ship, may achieve as much for God as the theologian in his study. To every man is given a certain circle whom he and he alone can touch; and no man can do more than charge that contact with the current of life divine. This quiet, unobtrusive, personal service will demand genuine humility and untiring patience. As Henry Drummond truly says: "We must learn again to be content with aiming at units. Every atom of the universe can act on every other atom, but only through the atom next it. And if a man would act upon every other man, he can do so best by acting one at a time upon those beside him. The true worker's world is a unit." [1]

While all this is perfectly true, and men can and do serve God's Kingdom, in a hundred different ways, simply, quietly, unobtrusively, it is also true that more Christians are desperately needed for "Church work" in the narrower sense of the term, and are often very hard to find. There are people who would accept the name of Christian who seem to regard any active work on behalf of their religion as an "extra," a sort of work of supererogation

[1] Drummond, *The New Evangelism, and other Papers*, p. 192.

suitable enough for those who have the leisure or the inclination, but hardly to be regarded as constituting a serious demand on the ordinary person. They are gravely wrong. The New Testament knows nothing about Christian service as an "extra"; a Christian who is not "serving" is a contradiction in terms, like a soldier whose only soldiering is to put on a uniform. The Churches to-day cannot get their work adequately done because of the number of their members who "sit at ease in Zion," unwilling to take a labouring oar as a club leader, a Sunday school teacher, a district visitor, or in any of the other unexciting but immensely valuable means of Christian service.

There is, indeed, grave need to-day that all who profess and call themselves Christians should awake to the personal responsibility which their profession lays upon them. Never was there more religious activity than at the present time; but also never was there greater need of a new and widespread spirit of personal service. Oftentimes we shrink back from that service, knowing something of its difficulty and its cost. We feel unworthy to aspire to such a task as that, or we are held back by a sense of our own utter impotence. How can such as we really win men for God? Is there any way in which we can fit ourselves actually to become transmitters of the life of Christ? These are pressing questions. And our survey of the whole subject of service is incomplete until we have set ourselves to find their answer.

In the first place, let it be clearly understood that the problem of service is at bottom a problem

of the inner life. All service must be based on life and character. Activity that has no character behind it will be a mere beating of the air as regards the achievement of any spiritual results. "The power to witness for Christ depends on being like Him. Men will always learn of Christ from those whom they see living with Christ-like simplicity for their sake."[1] "Until we are more like Him, we Christians, ordained and unordained alike, till with eyes purged from superstition and self-interest we can see Him as He is, we can never show Him to others; and surely this is the secret of the ill-success of the Churches."[2] We are thus at once thrust back on the prior questions which we have already examined, the question of character and behind it the question of faith, and we see in what vital connection they stand with this subject of service. It is an old truth, but one which has to be learnt afresh every day, that if we want to serve Christ's Kingdom, we must somehow contrive to keep near Christ's Person. There is no other way. If our contact with men is to inspire them with the Spirit of Christ, then our touch with them on the one side must be balanced by our touch with Him on the other. This is a principle which He Himself explicitly laid down. "He that believeth on Me"—and such "belief," as we saw, means nothing less than the going forth of our personality on to His in trust and love[3]—"out from within him shall flow rivers of living water."[4] This is the secret and

[1] From the Message of the Lambeth Conference, 1908.
[2] J. H. F. Peile, *Ecclesia Discens*, p. 280.
[3] See above, p. 7. [4] John vii. 38.

the only secret. Fill a vessel full enough, and it is bound to overflow.

Here is a mysticism stripped of mysticism's constant danger—selfishness. The Christian ideal of mystic union with Christ is as the poles asunder from the Buddhist conception of Nirvana. And it is the idea of service which severs them. The Buddhist ideal is so to be immersed in God that the world shall drift by unheeded. The Christian ideal is so to be immersed in God that blessing shall flow out on to the world. The Buddhist seeks God that he may forget the world; the Christian, that he may save it. Both seek after true holiness, but with what different motives! "For their sakes I sanctify Myself."[1] If that was one of the mainsprings of the Master's inner life, so must it be for the disciple also. It has once been seen perfectly, and on the lesser scale occasionally, what God can do for the world through a man who is holy, using that word in its greatest meaning. There is need to see that experiment repeated, far and wide. It is an experiment within the compass of all who have, in any degree, laid hold of that power which can produce goodness in the room of sin. There is no influence to compare with that of a personality given up to God and to goodness. We may cite, as one out of many possible examples, the case of the late Bishop Wilkinson, Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland. Without being a great thinker or a great orator, he wielded an astonishingly great influence for God on his generation. And what was its secret? Its secret lay in the fact that he was a

[1] John xvii. 19.

"practical mystic." "It would be impossible," says his biographer, "fully to understand the life of Bishop Wilkinson without knowing how intensely, how incessantly, he lived in the consciousness of the unseen world. It pressed upon him with a more absorbing interest than the things of sense." [1]

A further condition of successful service, as of successful prayer,[2] is an unhesitating faith in God. Faith, that is, in the sense of a profound conviction that God is the real Worker. There is a great difference between the conception of working for God and that of letting God work through us. He has indeed, as we have seen, invited human co-operation for the achievement of His purposes, but that gracious invitation must not be allowed to obscure the fact that His is the Hand that moves the world. "The help that is done upon earth He doeth it Himself." [3] "Work," it has been truly said, "is the Dagon of to-day; instead of being a witness to our faith in God, in Whose Name we do it, it is too often a vast monument to our disbelief in His ability to do without us." [4]

Indeed, it is only the conviction of God's love and power always working that can save His servants from a numbing sense of powerlessness and from the occasional temptation to blank despair. He who would serve the Kingdom, and win men into it, often finds himself up against a barrier that appears

[1] A. J. Mason, *Memoir of G. H. Wilkinson, Bishop of St. Andrews*, vol. i. p. 199.

[2] See above, p. 96.

[3] Ps. lxxiv. 13 (P.B.V.).

[4] L. H. M. Soulsby, *Stray Thoughts in Sickness and in Health*, p. 63.

insurmountable. This one "has no need of Christ." That one is wandering in a fog of doubt. Another, tied and bound by self-forged chains, seems to have lost the capacity for faith. Is it really impossible for these men to reach the living Christ? Is there no power that can strike the fetters from their limbs, that can lift the veil from their eyes? That power is not in me. I cannot do it. But God can. Nothing is too hard for Him. He is far more willing, and infinitely more able, to help than I am; and if only my faith will wait for Him, one day I shall behold the triumph of His love. It is this conviction, and this conviction alone, that makes the most difficult and seemingly most fruitless service *worth while*. God is there, at work; His servant can wait and hope. "Though he goeth on his way weeping, bearing forth the seed, he shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." [1]

Finally, if in any true sense we are to be servants of men, we must learn afresh what it means to be servants of Christ. This third condition of service, and the second also, are really implicit in the first, but for the sake of clearness and emphasis they may with advantage be stated separately.

Our service of men is so spasmodic and inefficient and uninspired, largely because we have drifted away from Christ's original idea of discipleship. Our power to lift the world towards God will be conditioned by our recovery of that ideal. "What we want to-day is a re-discovery of what it really means to be a Christian. Hardly any of us are living

[1] Ps. cxxvi. 6.

the Christian life, and we do not realize that it is so." [1] A half-hearted and unconsidered discipleship is like salt without its savour; [2] little wonder that it is unable to season the world. We are indeed to-day faced by a grave lack of power. The Church is confronted by mighty tasks, and seems to lack the spiritual force needful for their accomplishment. The Missionary Societies are marking time when they ought to be going forward. The Social Problem at home, with all the chaotic mass of moral and physical evil that hides under that name, threatens to get altogether beyond the efforts of organized Christianity. In both cases, we may be quite sure that no other solution will be found save in self-sacrificing personal service on the part of those who have learnt that true life is in Christ alone. A Missionary Society exists chiefly to organize, direct, and apply the personal service which individuals are willing to give. It is a fond fallacy that subscriptions or secretaries or solemn committee-meetings can save the world. Similarly with the Social Problem.[3] Obviously there must be corporate Christian action on a large scale. The Church must strongly support the State in any legislative action which would tend to give effect to the teaching of Christ. "We must express in the law of our land the principle that property should count for less and human souls for more, that simplicity and righteousness exalt a nation, and that any class monopoly of opportunity and enjoyment

[1] Paper by T. Tatlow, in *Thought and Discipleship*, p. 56.
[2] Cf. Luke xiv. 25–35.
[3] See further, *Every-day Religion*, chap. iii.

is not compatible with that love to men which our Lord demands." [1] But effective corporate action depends utterly on the initiative and resolution of individual Christians. It will only be set in motion as men re-discover and re-apply in their own lives the law of love and the law of service as defined by Christ Himself.

The crux of the matter really lies in the *cost* of such discipleship. Nothing worth having can be had without cost. There are no exceptions to that law. "If any man is willing to come after Me, let him say no to self, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." [2] If we would go with Christ and have any share in His redemptive work for the sons of men, we must be prepared to pay the price. We shall never gain anything by cheapening the terms of the Gospel. Garibaldi would have got nothing had he not demanded all. "I do not," cried he, "offer pay, provisions, or quarters; I offer hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles, and death."

The service of Christ is stern work, and one that demands ungrudging sacrifice. Not that such discipleship will demand a life in any way unnatural. It will not suggest particular conditions, or any special profession, for its exercise. It can be lived anywhere, by any man, in any circumstances. Our

[1] *Discipleship and the Social Problem*, p. 10. This pamphlet embodied the results of one of the early Student Movement Conferences on the "Social Problem."

[2] Luke ix. 23, 24.

Lord's own life was absolutely natural. He "came eating and drinking," yet sacrifice marked it all through. And the discipleship which He demands will cost us, not the heroics of a crusade, but a new temper and a new ideal in the little things of life. "There is no part of our life which it will not affect, and no relation which will not take a new colour under the new light. It will mean a slow and painful surrender of self-will and a daily attempt to walk in humility before God and man. Expenditure, pleasure, the choice of our life's work, and, above all, speech and thought as they touch those around us must all be modified. The missionary will be affected, as much as the teacher in a school at home, the merchant as much as the official, the journalist writing about foreign affairs as the preacher." [1]

This is the soil in which shall flourish a service that tells. It is in this school that we shall begin to learn, and to share, something of Christ's love for men. That is what we want. For it is its lovelessness that vitiates so much of our service. We set to work so coldly, so professionally; our laggard feet are spurred by duty, and so slowly learn to run for love. No wonder we achieve so little. It must indeed be "back to Christ" if we are to learn the true philanthropy, the burning passion for men that animated a heart like St. Paul's. It must be "back to Christ" for us to catch the love which can shake off stiff reserve; the love that can look through sin and see men with the eyes of God; the love that can stoop into the lowest pit amid the

[1] *Discipleship and the Social Problem*, p. 14.

mire and clay; the love that can suffer and wait and dare, even unto death. As with love, so with life. There must needs be sacrifice if we are to communicate *life*. "Except a grain of wheat falleth into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit." [1] The function of death is to release life. It is only as I die to sin and selfishness that through me the life of Christ can break forth and touch the lives I touch.

> "Measure thy life by loss instead of gain;
> Not by the wine drunk; but the wine poured forth;
> For Love's strength standeth in Love's sacrifice,
> And he who suffers most hath most to give."

Yet somehow sacrifice ceases to be sacrifice when your heart goes after Him. There is no drudgery, but only joy, in slaving for Him Whose service is perfect freedom. The cross is light when His hands lay it on your shoulder. "He that will take that crabbit tree and will carry it cannily, will yet find it to be such a burden as wings are to a bird and sails to a boat." [2]

[1] John xii. 24

[2] Samuel Rutherford.

CHAPTER VIII

VISION

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"*I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.*"—Revelation xxi. 2, 3.

"The follower of Jesus is a labourer, but he is a labourer together with God. He is the man with a hoe, but he has his part in the harvest whose reapers are the angels."—F. G. Peabody.

To see the significance of the part, we must view it in relation to the whole. To find a meaning for each step in a long-extended sequence of steps, we must look away to the end to which they lead. Observe the worker in the iron foundry, each day and all day labouring at bolt or plate or steel-rod. His work has no meaning at all save as it prepares for that day when, with all its thousand parts in place, the finished and perfected piece of mechanism shall leave the shops ready for instant use.

To many a man dissatisfied with himself and disappointed at the seeming uselessness of his service, there comes the temptation to apathy, to pessimism, sometimes even to despair. What is the good of it all? What is the use of toiling up a path that seems

to lead nowhere? There is one thing, and one thing only, that can dispel this spirit of despondency, and that is the Vision of the Goal. If a man can only lift up his head and see that Vision, the sight of it will bring new light into his eyes, new strength into his limbs. Any prayer that I can offer, any purity that I can win, any service that I can render, is infinitely *worth while*, and why? Simply because the best that I can be or do has its own essential place in paving the way for that

> "One far-off Divine Event,
> To which the whole creation moves."

Such a conception, ennobling and inspiring as it is, is not mere poetic fancy. It is based on solid fact. This hope is not the fond creation of intense human longing; it is part and parcel of historic Christianity. The disciple of Christ not merely may believe, but ought to believe, that "God is working His purpose out as year succeeds to year"; that every man born into the world has his place to fill in forwarding that purpose; that the goal of history is the final triumph of the Kingdom of God; that the Day is surely coming when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea.

That such a vision is justified, I hope shortly to show. That we need it, and need it sorely, almost goes without saying. Here only do we discover a final meaning for all those data of the Christian life which we have already examined. Only here is that which can shed the light of eternity on the daily round, the common task. Many a life is marred

and impoverished, solely from lack of a horizon. Christianity still suffers severely from the blight of parochialism. The advice to think imperially is not unneeded by some subjects of the King of kings. Here is one who is perhaps a long-established adherent of his Church, or, if a student, an interested member of his Christian Union. He is not unmindful of ordinary Christian obligations, but his vision is limited by the boundaries of his parish or the walls of his college. That his Christ is concerned with India or with China, with Japan or with Africa, with the affairs of the Western nations, or with the problems of the Near East—such a thought barely crosses his mind. Foreign missions is a term familiar enough, but the very reverse of anything alive and interesting; it may call for a shilling in the collection, but it conveys no summons to himself, it finds no live contact with his own inner life and thought. That the picture is not overdrawn those familiar with the facts will admit. Happily such an attitude is becoming less common, for it is beginning to be recognized that it is almost ludicrously inconsistent with the most elementary professions of Christianity. The last century has seen a revolution in Christian thought on the subject of Foreign Missions. The Vision of the Goal is dawning afresh on the Christian consciousness. Men are waking to the fact that we have a universal Christ, and that in Him alone lies the hope for the world. We are beginning to see that the order of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer is not accidental, but that Christ did actually intend a man to pray for the coming of the Kingdom before he began to pray for himself.

What, then, are the facts which justify this belief that one day the kingdoms of the world shall become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ? For the moment, let us leave the New Testament on one side, and note a general consideration which is calculated to appeal to anyone, whether he has any religious belief or not. It is this. If scientists have established the idea of evolution, and if it is legitimate to regard its operation as universal, then the evolutionist may well believe that the world process is neither haphazard nor meaningless, but alive with significance and purpose. "We are all agreed, except the pessimists, that some uplifting force is working in the world. Whether we call it Divine or not, no others will dispute the action of such a force in geological and historical times."[1] The very idea of progress involves the idea of a goal. In history, as in nature, "progress is change determined towards an end." And must there not be a mind behind controlling the process, shaping the development, in the direction of the far-off goal? Or, in Christian language, are we not justified in looking for the Purpose of God in the march of history?

And, in point of fact, that is what we find. History cannot, of course, be viewed as a perfect revelation of the purpose of God, for the obvious reason that man has been allowed freely to intervene. And where man apart from God has had his own way the result has usually been retrogression. "History is more than a logical or necessitated movement. It is a sphere where great issues are freely determined by the clash and collision of human wills. We cannot

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, vol. i. p. 232.

exalt God's control of the process at the expense of human initiative, or do violence to the moral condemnation which we instinctively pass upon much that has happened in earlier times, or that is happening now." [1] But having made this qualification, it may be said, and truly, that history, viewed as a whole, does reveal the working out of a great Purpose through the ages, and does record the definite though gradual progress of the Kingdom of God. To work out this point in detail cannot be attempted within the limits of this present chapter. It will only yield its full significance to a fairly close study of history. Suffice it to say—and the claim is not unreasonable—that Christianity has proved the great driving force behind human progress, from the time when the Gospel first went forth to meet, and within three centuries to win, the Roman world up to the present day, when all that is best in modern civilization is admittedly based on the principles of Jesus Christ.

But the final justification for the Christian's hope and aim is to be found in the idea of the Kingdom of God as originated and defined by Christ Himself. Space forbids examination of particular passages; only a rapid survey of the subject can be attempted. The Kingdom of God is too comprehensive an idea to be contained within any one definition. It may be said, roughly, that it stands for a relationship. It denotes God's rule recognized, welcomed, and obeyed by man and by men. This sovereignty necessarily has two aspects, individual and social. The second is a logical outcome of the first. A collection of individuals each owning Christ as King, constitutes

[1] V. F. Storr, *Development and Divine Purpose*, p. 244.

a society, united by a common devotion and obeying common laws. It follows, therefore, that all the relationships of life must come within the scope of the Kingdom of God. There cannot be one rule for the unit and another for the sum of units.

Abundant and illuminating was Christ's teaching about the Kingdom. He said it was to be spiritual in genesis, character, and development. Like the mustard seed, its beginnings are hardly noticeable. Like the leaven, it works from within outwards. A transformed society will only be attained through transformed personalities. As Herbert Spencer put it, "you cannot get golden conduct out of leaden instincts." Further, Christ spoke of the Kingdom as the *summum bonum*, the highest ideal, the most blessed consummation, for man and for men. Like a hidden treasure or a priceless pearl, any sacrifice is worth while to reach it. Such is its value and importance that it must be regarded as paramount even to the most sacred family claims. After this we are hardly surprised at being told that its destiny is universal. In view of its own spiritual character, and the unique personality of its King, it could not conceivably be anything else. And, further, the Kingdom's success is not postponed to some dim and distant future; its development is to proceed here and now, on this very earth. In the Lord's Prayer we are taught to ask "Thy Kingdom come . . . on earth as in Heaven" (as every student of the Greek Testament is aware, the words "on earth as in Heaven" stand in close connection with all three preceding petitions, and not with the third only). This being the case, the Church can never disclaim

responsibility for the community or the nation on the plea that she is concerned only with the salvation of the individual.

At the same time, Christ certainly implied, particularly in His eschatological discourse, that the Kingdom's final triumph belonged to the future. In this connection we are confronted with an important but difficult question. In what relationship does Christ's Second Advent stand to the development and success of the Kingdom of God? Let us first try to clear the ground by emphasizing two obvious principles which must govern any interpretation of Christ's Parousia discourse.[1] We must remember on the one hand that the discourse is clothed in the vivid imagery of Jewish Apocalypse, which should warn us against searching its details for minute and particular predictions. And on the other hand any interpretation must harmonize with the whole body of Christ's teaching about the Kingdom. It is at least safe to say that the parousia, or Second Coming of Christ, stands for a crisis in history of some sort. What will be the nature of this crisis? On one view it will be a clean sweep of the old order and a sudden and violent introduction of the new. The blackboard will be sponged clean that God may write on it afresh. Evil in the very moment of its triumph will be thrown down and the rule of righteousness set up. It is difficult,

[1] Matt. xxiv., Mark xiii., Luke xxi. 5–36. The eschatological element in the Gospels is still the subject of theological controversy. A considerable period of further study and investigation will probably have to elapse before any general agreement is reached on the question which is here raised and—very tentatively—answered.

however, to reconcile this view with what we know of God, and what He has taught us of His Kingdom. It is as if His first plan for the world had failed, and He was compelled to try another. Is it *a priori* likely that God would as it were arbitrarily intervene, and by the exercise of His Sovereign power summarily displace the Evil by the Good? May not that crisis be, not so much a despairing intervention, as a natural climax, when the age-long development of the Kingdom shall have reached its culminating point, when the world shall be *ready* for the universal reign of the King Himself? Such a climax would be the crown of a long preceding process, in which the nations of the world gradually find their place in the federation of the Kingdom of God. And, the tares being separated from the wheat, it would also prove the birth of an age promising yet greater glories for the Kingdom of God.[1]

If such an interpretation of Christ's idea of the Kingdom be correct, its results must be to place the whole missionary enterprise on broad and permanent foundations, to inspire it with a higher ideal, a larger hope, a more far-reaching purpose. To borrow an apt metaphor from a recent writer, the aim of Christian missions is no longer to go out in a life-boat and pick up a few struggling survivors from a hopeless wreck; it is rather to get the ship, which is only aground, safe to port with all on board. The missionary objective is no longer the individual alone, it includes the nation also. The larger aim is thrust upon us, whether we will or no. By a

[1] Yet one cannot safely dogmatize as to the time of that Coming; see Luke xii. 40.

process that is inevitable, " Christian Missions pass speedily into the sociological stage. . . . The aim to reach the individual soul expands into an endeavour to create a society imbued with the Spirit of Christ." [1] Not that the individual, on this view, becomes of less importance; on the contrary, his value increases just because he is viewed in his relationship to the whole body of which he is a member. " In so far as corporate and individual redemption can be separated, the one was Christ's purpose as much as the other; neither is ' primary ' and neither is ' secondary.' Both are fundamental." [2] " The salvation of the individual culminates in the salvation of the race, the salvation of the race involves the salvation of the individual." [3]

This summons to evangelize and Christianize the *nations*, which, as we have tried to show, is implicit in the idea of the Kingdom of God, gains added point and emphasis from the rise and growth, during the present century, of the spirit of nationalism. As that great missionary thinker, Dr. Mott, pointed out some time ago, " A wave of nationalism is sweeping over the non-Christian world. While we recognize the growth of this spirit in Latin America, in parts of Africa, both north and south, and in eastern and south-eastern Europe, the most rapid advance into national self-consciousness is observable among the Asiatic races. God chose the regions fringing the Mediterranean, with their eighty millions of people, as the theatre of the

[1] Cairns, *Christianity in the Modern World*, p. 260.
[2] Houlder, *Christian Discipleship and Social Life*, p. 30.
[3] Bernard Lucas, *The Empire of Christ*, p. 104.

activities of the first great era; the lands bordering on the Upper Atlantic, with their four hundred millions, for the second great era; and the countries upon the Pacific and its neighbouring seas, with eight hundred millions, for the third great era. All across that vast Asiatic Continent is being felt the thrill of a new life. From the Inland Sea of Europe to the Inland Sea of Japan there is an impressive manifestation of new national aspirations. This spirit of nationalism is not to be crushed and withstood. It is the function of the Christian movement to help inform it, to help purify it, to help guide it, to help energize it." [1]

Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that in the missionary enterprise is to be found the answer, and the only answer, to the pressing racial, national, and international problems of our day. Within the Western nations industrial problems have reached an acute stage. The present solution of their international problems is the feudal one of each being armed to the teeth. In the apt description of Professor Cairns, "the code of morals, and even of manners, as between nations, is such as no modern civilized society would tolerate as between its citizens. If we are to take the popular Press of Europe or America as fair indicators of international feeling, the Great Powers of Christendom treat one another like ruffians in an East End slum or a mining-camp, rather than like Christians or even gentlemen." [2] It is quite evident that the

[1] Mott, *Modern World Movements: God's Challenge to the Church*, pp. 3, 10.

[2] Cairns, *op. cit.*, p. 300. See the whole chapter (vi.).

causes of this international feudalism are moral. At bottom the final cause of international suspicion is national selfishness. But where is the spell to be found which will remove man's inborn selfishness? Where, indeed, save in the Spirit of Christ? We may dream of a devotion to the "common good," which alone will solve the Social Problem, and which, on a wider scale, will place international relations on the broad base of justice and peace and goodwill. But such a temper will only come with the coming of the Kingdom of God. No power on earth can make a man care a brass farthing for the "common good" until Christ touches his life and he finds himself, in a way he can hardly explain, *compelled* to love his neighbour.[1]

Further, the relations of the higher and lower races have reached a stage fraught with the possibility of momentous consequences. Isolation is a thing of the past. "By means of the various applications of steam and electricity, the world has been turned into a single neighbourhood. We have seen the death of distance. The nations and peoples are being drawn into closer and closer touch with each other through trade and commerce, through the growing volume of travel, through intermarriage, through the influence of international societies of various kinds, through the activity of the Press, and through the development of international

[1] This paragraph was written in 1910. In revising (in 1923) I purposely allow it to stand; because, despite the terrible lessons of the Great War, and despite the League of Nations, force is still the main arbiter in international disputes. For the whole subject of Christianity and international affairs reference may be permitted to chapter ii. of the writer's *Every-day Religion.*

law." [1] "It is hardly too much to say," observes Mr. Bryce in his Romanes Lecture, "that for economic purposes mankind is fast becoming one people, in which the hitherto backward nations are taking a place analogous to that which the unskilled workers have held in each one of the civilized nations. Such an event opens a new stage in world history, a stage whose significance has, perhaps, been as yet scarcely realized either by the thinker or the man of action." [2] All this is plain matter of fact. And what is to be its result?

It is a mere assumption to suppose that the higher races must of necessity elevate the lower in some inevitable and evolutionary process of civilization. Ordinary human possibilities point to quite as likely an alternative in a world-wide demoralization, or the final clash of inter-racial hatred in some fateful Armageddon. The issue has to be squarely faced. If the higher races are to govern in the interests of the governed, if the lower races are to be lifted up and fitted to take their place among the nations of the world, if this shrinkage of the world is to make for racial peace and unity, some tremendous moral force must be forthcoming for the task. And where shall this be found save in Christianity? What ultimate hope is there for the common peace and good of the world save in a great federation of the nations within the Kingdom of God?

There is one other aspect of the missionary enterprise which gains a new significance from the fresh endeavour of our generation to understand the

[1] Mott, *op. cit.*, p. 11. [2] Quoted by Cairns, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

spirit and purposes of Christ. That is the relation of the Gospel Message to the great non-Christian religions of the world. The modern believer in Foreign Missions is as convinced as his forefathers that those religions are destined one day to bow before the Message of the Cross. But he no longer feels obliged to believe that Buddhism and Hinduism and Mohammedanism are from beginning to end the work of the devil. On the contrary, he is compelled, if he is honest, to see the good that is in them, and at the same time to ascribe that good to the Author and Giver of all that is good. And, remembering that Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil, he will embrace a missionary policy that looks for and tends the seed that God has already sown; "for," as Henry Drummond truly said, "there is no field in the world where the Great Husbandman has not sown something." Moreover, we may be sure that Christianity, which was born in the East and grew up in the West, will never realize all the wealth of its heritage until, as St. John foresaw, "they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it."[1] It may well be that the Hindu or the Hausa will find fresh beauties in the face of Christ which Western eyes have utterly failed to see. We, with all our centuries of Christian thought, have as yet understood but a fragment of His colossal mind. If Christ is universal, it will take a universe to interpret Him.

The lesson of the whole situation would seem fairly plain. On the one side the nations, jostling each other in a new contact, seething with life,

[1] Rev. xxi. 26.

bursting with possibilities both for good and evil; on the other side, the Kingdom of God with its infinite power to transform, to unify, to uplift. These are facts which offer the Church of Christ a unique opportunity, and at the same time lay on her a tremendous responsibility. She has been entrusted with the secret of the Kingdom; on her account of her stewardship it depends whether the Kingdom shall remain latent or shall become realized before the eyes of men. The world is challenging the Church; how is the Church going to answer the challenge?

The challenge is not, thank God, passing unheeded, though as yet the response has come from the few and not from the many. But there is a cloud in the sky with the promise of abundance of rain. The old missionary ignorance is being gradually displaced by new knowledge, the old apathy by new enthusiasm, the old inertia by new devotion. There is still needed a far greater measure of spiritual fitness in order to grapple with the task successfully. But the beginnings are here. The twentieth century finds the Church and the Churches rousing themselves to the work after a fashion that is almost reminiscent of the first. One great landmark in the new movement was the World Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh in June 1910, an event which, now that it can be seen in true perspective, may rightly be called epoch-making. One of the best known of the attendant bishops stated that, in his deliberate opinion, the Conference was the most significant event of Christian history since the great Council of Nicæa in 325 A.D.; and he may well have been

right. As *The Times* said in one of its leading articles, commenting on the unique phenomenon presented by the Conference, "Only a willingness to reconsider the postulate that the age of miracles is past will put us somewhere on the way to an explanation." It is not necessary after the lapse of years, to re-tell in detail the story of this Conference, though no keen student of missionary history could afford to neglect its official reports, or W. H. T. Gairdner's contemporary account of it in book form, *Edinburgh*, 1910: *An Account and Interpretation of the World Conference*. The main point is that the Conference proved a wholly new object lesson in the value of the possibilities of *Christian Unity*. I spoke above of the spiritual fitness needed by the Church to fulfil her task. Perhaps the most serious bar to attaining that fitness lies in the hard and sharp divisions which at present cut and sever and mutilate the Church of Christ. The result, as the Church faces the world, is weakness and wasteful confusion. How are we to conquer, so long as we are divided? There is no doubt that any comprehensive plan to enable the various Christian Communions to join hands in their work would be equivalent to doubling the present missionary forces. The sinfulness as well as the waste of this lack of unity has been of late oppressing with fresh force many a conscience in the different Churches. Corporate penitence for our divisions, corporate hope and prayer for a new unity, did unquestionably reach a new stage at Edinburgh. There was seen the unwonted, almost the unparalleled, spectacle of all the chief Churches of the Protestant Com-

munion meeting together, without surrender of principle, yet each contributing the best of their particular heritage, to plan and to pray for the salvation of the world. "The truly wonderful thing of the Conference," wrote Professor Cairns, "was the apparition of a new type of fellowship between the disciples of Christ, the transcending of differences that hitherto proved more intractable than those of social circumstance and education and race." If these experiments in unity can be repeated, if this spirit of unity can grow and conquer the old division and narrowness and exclusiveness, then indeed there is hope for the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Since *Edinburgh*, 1910, much has happened. After the Great War many who before were inclined to ignore religion have been forced to recognize that Christianity may well be the only hope for a world gone mad, and that in Europe, in Asia, in Africa the final issue may be between Christ and chaos. As to reunion, the great Lambeth Conference of all the Bishops in 1920, with the important negotiations since, have brought the matter at last into the foreground of the Church's thought and work; and, however complex the questions and formidable the task, there are signs of the growth of a conscience and a determination in the Church which will never let go of this problem until it is solved. There are similar signs of awakening in the missionary conscience of the Church. We are still far enough from the ideal, when every ordinary Church member will be an enthusiast for spreading God's Kingdom. But we are moving towards it.

There is a growing recognition in religious circles that the Church is not an end in itself, but only an instrument, an agent, to herald and to build the City of God. And men are beginning to see the anomaly, the grotesque anomaly, of a "Christian" who "doesn't believe in Foreign Missions." I may be permitted to re-tell a story here which I have printed elsewhere.[1] The collector at a missionary meeting, hearing a whispered protest from one to whom he was handing the bag, "I never give to missions," replied in a flash, "Then take something out of the bag, sir; the money is for the heathen."

There is one other thing that must be said in conclusion. We have looked at the vision of The Goal. We have seen something of what it would mean for the Kingdom to triumph throughout the world. We have, very cursorily, taken stock of the Church's fitness for the task confronting her. But, when all is said and done, the question will come creeping in: Are we attempting the impossible? Can the thing really be done? Are not we men setting ourselves a task which is really beyond the power of man to achieve? These questions are formidable, sometimes paralyzing. The only conceivable answer is suggested by the form of our question. Our task *is* hopelessly and ludicrously beyond the power of man to achieve. But it is not beyond the power of God. There, in a sentence, is contained the one justification for the Church's prayer and toil, there lies the one secret of our hope that the Kingdom is coming. Without the presence of the power of God, "the disparity between the

[1] *Parochial Church Councils and Overseas Missions*, p. 4.

undertaking and the means of achievement would make the problem incomparably foolish. But the sufficiency of God makes the difference between folly and sublimity." The task will be done because God will do it.

How easy it is to say it, how hard really to believe it. Yet this belief is a necessary condition for God to act. The delay in the Kingdom's coming is not from Him. "A Father-God must be always ready to usher in the 'Kingdom' always *willing* to put forth His infinite resources for the rescue of His children from evil powers too strong for them. If He does it not it must be that He is hindered; and nothing can hinder a Father-God from being fully Himself to His children, but their distrust and the self-willed independence which distrust engenders. . . . 'The mills of God' have ground slowly only because He chooses to wait for man. . . . Let there only be born an implicit trust and its twin-brother, the surrender of self-will, and at once that limited slow-working Providence which had been so much the rule as to seem a fixed order of nature would prove its unnaturalness by giving place to a new system of nature, an unrestrained exercise of God's infinite resources on the side of all that is good in man and good for man. So, and only so, would the Kingdom of God arrive; its time was *whenever men learned faith*." [1] "If around us to-day in the unseen lie all the illimitable potencies of the Divine spirit which lay around the first ages, awaiting only the rise of a generation stronger in

[1] Professor A. G. Hogg, in the World Missionary Conference *Monthly News Sheet*, January 1910.

faith and love than our own, then clearly the one true attitude for the Church is to confess its historic sin, and gird itself to the most resolute and strenuous endeavour and prayer that the benumbing mist of our common unbelief may be dispelled, that the redeeming will of God in Christ may have free course in blessing the entire life of man." [1]

It is no good to minimize the cost of seeing our vision actualized. A new order of life, involving a new scale of service and sacrifice, and above all a new quality of faith; a new and corporate vision of God's "secure availableness" for man and for men; a recovery of the New Testament sense of God and along with it that dynamic which characterized the Apostolic life and labour; that is the price to pay if we want the Kingdom to come. The Church has to pay it; but "the Church" simply means you and me and all who bear the name of Christian. God show us the vision of a redeemed world, and God help us so to live and pray that the vision may come true.

[1] D. S. Cairns, Report of Commission IV., World Missionary Conference.

CHAPTER IX

THE MODERN OUTLOOK

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"Man is not God, but hath God's end to serve,
A master to obey, a course to take,
Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become—
Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
From what once seemed good to what now proves best.
How could man have progression otherwise?"

ROBERT BROWNING.

THERE are many Christians (and this book is written largely for such) who, from whatever cause, do not read a great deal, and who find it difficult to think hard and continuously on complex subjects. Such people are sometimes bothered, in their religion, by three questions which they find, as it were, floating about in many minds, perhaps in their own, and for which they never succeed in finding a wholly satisfactory answer. One of these questions is about science and religion. Do scientists—the men who know all about Nature and her secrets—find it specially hard to "believe"? Does science really contradict what religion says? A second question is about the Bible. Has all the new learning and the new criticism discredited the Bible? Can we still believe the Bible to be "true"?

The third question is about psychology. Has modern psychology explained away a good deal of what was thought to be real religious experience? An endeavour will be made in this chapter to answer those three questions. In making this attempt I shall try to face facts, and to be constructive. Nothing worth having is ever lost by facing facts. Moreover, we of the Christian faith always stand to gain and not to lose by the continuous development of human thought. All truth has its fount in Him Whom we serve; whether consciously or unconsciously it is in the study of His works and His ways that scientist, historian, and philosopher spend their life and labour. Any attitude of suspicion on our part is therefore not merely unnecessary, it is untrue to our highest convictions. Nothing of their work will remain save what is true; and all that is true is for us and not against us.

It may not be amiss to say, at the outset, that there is no idea in this chapter of trying to make any original contribution to the discussion of those subjects which will be here considered. Any value the chapter may possess will be, not for the scholar or the thinker, but for the "plain man," who wants a brief and untechnical account of what some of the scholars and thinkers are doing.

I. There is little doubt that the nineteenth century will go down to posterity as marking the beginning of a new era of human knowledge. And perhaps the greatest progress of all has been made in the realm of physical science. In the ancient study of Nature, ingenious and fantastic theories held the field, while mere facts were little accounted

of. The last century witnessed a complete reversal of this arbitrary method. Men cleared their minds of prepossessions and approached the study of Nature with the single aim of finding out the *facts*. In every possible field of knowledge thousands of investigators have been patiently and tirelessly at work, with telescope and microscope, with scalpel and test-tube, observing, recording, classifying every fact that they could find, in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth. And the result has been to revolutionize our conception of Nature. Nature has been forced, in this direction and in that, to yield up her secrets, and we now know things and can do things which to our forefathers would have seemed sheer miracle. The practical results of this new knowledge have been far-reaching; it has been justly remarked that "our whole modern world of industry and commerce rests upon the scientific view of nature."

But undoubtedly the most important result for thought from all this investigation of the physical world around us has been the emergence of the twin conceptions of *Natural Law* and *Evolution*. The conclusion has been forced upon us that the world in which we live is an ordered world, and that life as we know it is the result of an age-long unfolding of successive stages. There is nothing wayward or haphazard in the vast and intricate world process. "Nowhere is there a hint within the farthest limits of telescopic vision of any region 'where sentinels of order do not stand,' and the spectrum reveals the same chemistry at work in the uttermost stars as on the earth on which we

live."[1] Effect follows cause in assured and regular sequence. There is an unvarying and seemingly mechanical regularity about Nature's happenings. The sun rose to-day, and we have every reason for believing it will rise to-morrow. We are sure that the tree now robed in its autumn gold will be draped with fresh green next spring, and every spring until it dies. As often as I let go of the pen which I hold, I believe it will fall on the table. These things happen with such unfailing sameness that we can only regard them as instances of universal, unaltering law.

And what has been the result for religious thought of this idea of Law? The effect was at first a somewhat violent, and, as it has since proved, quite unnecessary, hostility between Science and Faith. On the one side the theologians roundly asserted that the new science was the high-road to atheism. On the other side, some of the new thinkers gave colour to this fear by their confident assurance that in physical science they had discovered the key of all knowledge. Twenty or thirty years ago the Materialists, as these thinkers were called, had a large and influential following. Dominated by the amazing triumphs of physical science, they held that the material world, as we see it now and as we can trace its history, is its own explanation. They pointed to the continuous chain of causation which we call evolution, beginning with dead matter and working upwards through organic life to conscious mind, and hailed this matter with its latent energy as the solution of the mysteries of

[1] Griffith-Jones, *The Ascent through Christ*, p. 6.

the universe. But they made one tremendous mistake. They failed to see that when you have traced a process you have not necessarily explained its *cause*. It is all very well to say that matter contains within itself the potency of life, but how did it get that potency? We may conjure with the words, matter and motion and force and energy, but we are still left with ultimate questions of cause and origin unanswered. Huxley, for instance, said that the universe had resulted from the interaction of the powers possessed by the original molecules. But, as Professor Storr pertinently asked, "Is this a satisfactory explanation? A force acting on a molecule would certainly move it, but the point is, why the molecule moves in a particular direction,"[1] and, we may add, what is behind the "force" that moves it? Its failure to answer these ultimate questions has been so marked that Materialism as a philosophical theory is in our day largely, and as some would say finally, discredited. "It is indeed a remarkable fact that some of the most eminent scientists who have at one period of their career adopted some form of materialism have been forced from it by deeper reflection. This is true of a psychologist so eminent as Wundt, and a scientist so distinguished as Virchow."[2] In fact the whole trend of modern science is in the other direction; the sharp line of division between matter and spirit is wearing thin, and some investigators would be hard put to it to say where one ends and the other begins.

[1] V. F. Storr, *Development and Divine Purpose*, p. 100.
[2] Peake, *Christianity: Its Nature and Its Truth*, p. 45.

Materialism, then, has failed: and modern philosophy, apart altogether from religious belief, is tending towards a spiritual interpretation of the universe as the only one that can satisfy the demands of reason. It is only rational to suppose that behind the force which we see everywhere at work, behind the ordered sequences of natural law, behind the age-long development towards some far-off goal,[1] there must be some kind of originating and controlling Mind. Of all human experience it may truly be said that matter is meaningless apart from spirit. Its final reality depends, not on its moving molecules, but on its relation to personality and thinking mind. The most real thing about a sunset is not the ethereal vibrations which cause it, but the reverent wonder with which we watch it. The most real thing about a sonata of Beethoven is not its sound-waves and their acoustic laws, but the mind that conceived it and the thrill of inward delight with which we hear it. But if this kind of human experience is valid, then it constitutes part of the "stupendous evidence that the material universe is a manifestation of spirit;"[2] and in our search for origins we are forced to the conclusion that "spirit is the final cause of matter."[3]

We must not, however, suppose that the spiritual interpretation of the universe is opposed to the

[1] It is worth pointing out that we do not beg the question when speaking of goal in connection with development. Most thinkers are agreed in interpreting development teleologically. Indeed *progress* has no meaning if we strip it of the idea of a goal.

[2] Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, p. 35. See chapters i.–iii. for an admirable discussion of the whole subject.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

scientific. It rather includes the other, as the greater includes the less. The scientist examines and classifies his phenomena, and pronounces with authority on the apparently infallible laws which govern their operation. His conclusions, no doubt, are perfectly correct within his own sphere. It is when he tries to stretch them so as to account for the originating cause and the final meaning of what he is examining that their inadequacy becomes apparent. An admirable illustration of this point has been given by a recent writer. "We introduce a completely deaf man into a party of people who are watching a pianist play on a grand piano of which the lid is lifted. The deaf man watches the changing expression of musician and audience, learns that there is a sympathetic experience, and understands the applause; but for explanation has only the moving fingers, the little leaping notes and vibrating wires and wood. By dint of observation he forms a complete theory, founded on sight and touch, knows what will affect pathetically, cheerfully, enthusiastically. His theory is quite complete; he only omits one thing, the end and origin of the whole, that for which the piano was made and that which the jumping notes produce—namely, the music. His explanation is quite complete and quite correct—only it is quite meaningless. It opposes the true theory by its negations and omissions, while the real explanation of the scene does not oppose but includes all that the deaf man has discovered." [1]

At this point Christianity—or, to speak more

[1] Margaret Benson, *The Venture of Rational Faith*, p. 46.

accurately, Theism—carries the spiritual interpretation a step further. There is general agreement that Mind is the cause of matter. But the Theist goes on to affirm that the material universe, in its whole aspect and in its detailed working, is the expression of the controlling Mind and the pervading Spirit of a Personal God. This conception of Divine Immanence, to give it its common name, which is present in the Bible, but for many centuries had remained in the background of Christian thought, has been recovered largely owing to the movement of Physical Science, already mentioned. Thoughtful men had become increasingly dissatisfied with the common eighteenth-century conception of a Creator Who set the world going once for all and then, as it were, left it to work itself. The Deists, as the upholders of this theory were called, looked for Divine activity, not in natural law, but only in those apparent violations of law which they called miracle. This had the practical effect of banishing God from the world that He had made. And it has been one of the works of Science to destroy this idea of a God Who acts on the world only from the outside; for the new emphasis on His Immanence as Indwelling Spirit simply means that "the common works of Nature are as truly Divine acts as anything we can imagine done by miracle." [1] Moreover, this idea of Divine Immanence is, from the religious standpoint, a necessary correlative of the theory of evolution. If evolution points to a God at all, it points not to a mere spasmodic Divine intervention at the

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, vol. ii. p. 277.

" gaps," but to a God Who is at work through all the intricate stages of the age-long process. If creation was not a sudden act, but a process spread over millions of years, there appears not less, but more need for a Mind to plan and a Hand to shape. If man developed from a jelly-fish, and the world developed from a nebula, the demand for a Creator is not thereby diminished but intensified. " A stone Galatea who could develop into a living Galatea does not need a lesser but a greater sculptor." [1]

The old sharp, and often misleading, distinction between the natural and the supernatural has thus lost much of its validity. If God's spirit is at work, fixing the bounds of the furthest star, and giving life to the tiniest flower, the " natural " and the " supernatural " are one. " Through Him all things were made, and apart from Him, nothing that exists came into being." [2] " In Him we live and move and have our being." [3]

At the same time it must always be borne in mind that, great and vital as the conception is, the idea of Immanence does not express the whole truth of God's Nature and relation to the world. It must be balanced by the equally true and vital idea of God's Transcendence. That is to say, God is above and apart from as well as in the world. His Spirit may be said to be in the world in somewhat the same sense as the spirit of an artist may be regarded as being in the picture he has painted, or the sculpture he has made. But God is no more to be identified with the world than the artist with his picture. Such identification is the fundamental

[1] Benson, *op. cit.*, p. 40. [2] John i. 3. [3] Acts xvii. 28.

error of Pantheism. I shall have some more to say about the limitations of the idea of Immanence further on, and in a somewhat different connection.

We may now pass on to deal more explicitly with the subject of miracles. Half a century ago the miracles recorded in the Gospels were regarded as the chief evidence of the Christian faith. Theological thought has since swung to the other extreme, and so far from being looked to as the main bulwark of the faith, miracles have come themselves to be regarded as in need of explanation and defence. The reason of this change of attitude is not far to seek. It is almost entirely due to the rise of Physical Science to which reference has already been made. As we saw, one of the great contributions to knowledge made by Physical Science has been the idea of the uniformity of natural law. And it is in that idea that the real crux of the difficulty about miracles lies. If the reign of Law in Nature is absolute, what room can there be for the seemingly arbitrary variations caused by "miracle"?

First, let us clear the ground by noting what Natural Law is and what it is not. The term Law is in some ways misleading. We observe that, so far as our experience goes, phenomenon B has always followed phenomenon A, and we build upon that experience the "law" that B always does and always will follow A. But in this "law" there is as much of faith as of knowledge. We cannot *know* a fact before it has come to pass. However reasonable our belief may be that the sun will rise tomorrow, it is still only a belief.[1] The idea that

[1] Compare Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, vol. i. p. 47. The

events must happen as they always have happened —the idea which constitutes the difficulty of miracle —is then only based upon an assumption, an assumption which is valid enough so far as it goes, but which cannot logically be erected into an infallible law.

There is a second important qualification necessary in using the category of Natural Law. We have seen already, in another connection, good reason to believe that the material world is caused by Spirit, that its development has been, and is being, controlled by the Immanent Spirit of God. Stated otherwise, we may say that Natural Law is the expression of the Will of God. But the point with which we are just now concerned is that Natural Law cannot be a perfect expression of the Will of God, although it is true so far as it goes.[1] "What we have in the world is something *of* God or *from* God, but it cannot possibly be *God* as He is in Himself. It cannot be so, because the entire manifestation (apart from Christ) is finite, and under necessary conditions and limitations. Much of the universe can give no moral manifestation of God at all; and at its best and highest it is always limited and imperfect." [2]

If this is so, if God acts in natural law, but is not limited by it; that is, if God is *free* in His

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whole passage, pp. 47 f. (to which the present writer is indebted for the above suggestions), develops the argument with considerable force.

[1] Compare what was said above on Divine Transcendence (p. 153).

[2] W. L. Walker, *Christian Theism and a Spiritual Monism*, pp. 244 f.

universe, then there is room for "miracle." The *real* "natural law," as God knows it and could (perhaps does) use it, must be something very much vaster and more wonderful than the system whose laws we are painfully spelling out. It is manifestly absurd to suppose that what we know of natural law is the sum total of the possibilities of Divine action. But if once we admit, as we reasonably needs must, that what we call "natural law" is only a part, perhaps a very small part, of God's activity in the universe; if once we admit that God can work on a higher plane, through laws and sequences beyond our present knowledge, then miracle becomes reasonable. It is only rational to suppose that God is free. To argue from human analogy—and what other analogy have we?—we are free,[1] and God can hardly be less. The only ultimate cause with which we are personally acquainted is will, and will as we know it is free. If our will is free, and free too within certain limits to control and direct the laws of Nature, must not God's will be free on an infinitely higher and wider scale? "If it be true that man can effect his own purposes in the world without any breach of natural law—that he can subordinate the physical order to higher purposes without violation of that order—how much more must we believe that the Infinite Spirit, who is the inner life and cause of all things, responds to all the needs of His

[1] We cannot here discuss the claims of determinism. The strongest argument for the reality of free-will resides in the inextinguishable conviction of every sane man that he *is* free. As Dr. Johnson once said, "All theory is against free-will, but all experience is in its favour."

spiritual creatures without violation of that universal order which He has Himself ordained." [1] "A miracle only means the liberty of God." [2] "We have become obsessed by the idea of natural law to the point of tying down the infinite God to that single system of which science is spelling out the laws." [3] On this view miracle is no longer a violation of law, but an expression of law operating at a higher level and sub-serving a greater purpose.

Such an interpretation of miracle throws new light on, and adds new significance to, the historic miracles wrought by Jesus Christ. The lame attempts to explain away those miracles as mind-cures, or as what Matthew Arnold called "moral therapeutics," appear as unnecessary as they are arbitrary. For if this was the supreme and critical moment in the history of the world, if God really was then and there intervening for the salvation of the race, would it not be pre-eminently a fitting occasion for Him to transcend the ordinary operation of physical forces and manifest before the eyes of men the higher laws that would more perfectly

[1] D'Arcy, *Christianity and the Supernatural*, p. 26.

[2] Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, p. 234.

[3] Professor Hogg, of Madras, in the Edinburgh Conference *Monthly News Sheet*, January 1910. There are not a few signs of reaction against this obsession of modern thought by the category of natural law. "Men are crying for a way of escape, for freedom, for something beyond the iron law of natural uniformity."—Figgis, *The Gospel and Human Needs* (Hulsean Lectures, 1908–9). See the whole of the first lecture. And compare Prof. Schiller's remark in his paper on *Religion and Science* (Pan-Anglican Congress Papers, S. B. 18): "God to be really worthy of our worship must be man's Helper, nay, his Saviour, his ideal refuge from the grinding pressure of the cosmic mechanism."

express His Nature and His Purposes? And this view of Christ's miracles may be stated with equal force from a slightly different standpoint. Supposing the truth of the Christian view of Christ, then may not His miracles be the "natural" works of a sinless Man living in perfect harmony with the will of God, and therefore in perfect harmony with the whole range of physical law and all its infinite resources? "Even the greatest imaginable victories of science," urges Professor Gwatkin, "are no measure of the results a man might obtain, or possibly enable others to obtain, if he were in perfect sympathy of feeling, thought, and will with the Divine order of the entire universe—a character theologically described as without sin. Given such a man, I see nothing unlikely in the story that he had power to raise the dead. If it is not our own experience that Love is stronger than death the reason may be that none but such a man can ever wield the fulness of its power." [1]

II. To turn to the second question about the Bible and criticism. Another highly significant event in the progress of modern thought has been the rise of the Science of Historical Criticism. The dominating temper in this movement, as in that of Physical Science, is a zeal to arrive at the facts. During the nineteenth century thinkers began to examine history afresh, turning on it the searchlight of a minute and patient scientific criticism, testing anew the sources and documents on which the original theories had been based. It was quite inevitable that, as time went on, this

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, vol. i. pp. 186–7.

critical process should be applied to the Bible too. It was, and is, alien to the temper of the age to rest content with the decisions of authority or of tradition about the meaning and the history of the Bible. Thinking men desire to get behind tradition, to get behind the written text, and to investigate the process by which the Bible as we know it came into being. And this work of investigation is what is commonly known as the Science of Biblical Criticism.

It would clear the air of a good deal of suspicion and misunderstanding if the ordinary man would take the trouble to discover what criticism is and what it is not. There are still too many devout Christians who frankly regard the higher critic as an enemy of the Faith. This profound misconception is chiefly due to a mistake as to the nature and functions of criticism. Criticism as such is not ranged on the opposite side to all that believers hold dear. Indeed, as I hope later on to show, it is more of a friend than an enemy. It is, to speak accurately, neutral; it is a non-combatant. Criticism is simply a scientific test, and as such stands altogether apart from the nature and the quality of the thing tested. It does not necessarily make that which is insecure secure, neither can it render insecure that which is secure. What should we think of a man who employed an engineer to test his bridge and then hovered about him with suspicious glances, and finally tried to pitch him into the river? The one aim of criticism is to get behind all arbitrary preconceptions and imaginary theorizings, and build its judgment upon the *facts*.

Like the biologist with his microscope, the critic arms himself with all the implements of modern research and sets himself to find out everything he can about the language, the authorship, the history of each book in that wonderful Divine library which we call the Bible. The textual critic engages in a study of the actual text of the book. Is this the original text that we have before us? If not, what stages has it passed through in reaching its present form? Can we, by comparing the various readings in the different manuscripts that have survived, approximately reproduce the original? Then comes the "higher"[1] critic with further questions about the book's origin and authorship. Who wrote it? Why did he write it? Whom did he write it for? And so on. And finally comes the historical critic, who labours to fix and estimate the place of the book in history, to recover the atmosphere of the time and place in which the book was composed, to recreate and realize the attitude and outlook of the writer and his contemporaries.

It is no doubt true that some non-Christian critics approach the Bible with a bias against the supernatural, and proceed to interpret it in accordance with their own rationalistic assumptions. Such a method, however, is essentially unscientific, and its results are proportionately worthless. No good study can be carried out in any sphere unless there is a certain sympathy with the object studied. A chemist might analyze a picture's paint and pronounce on the age of its canvas, but unless he approached it with something of the artistic spirit,

[1] "Higher," in technical distinction from textual or "lower."

it would mean about as much to him as it would to his dog. It is one thing to investigate; it is quite another thing to appreciate. And there are other critics, Christian critics, who, for lack of sober judgment and saving common sense, lose themselves in a maze of wild and fantastic theories, theories which wander afield unlinked by any visible connection with the facts from which they are supposed to start. But the rationalists and the theorists may safely be disregarded. Their speculative criticism is purely subjective, and, like most subjective criticism, it convinces no one but themselves. In any case it is powerless to invalidate the sound results of sober scholarship, which simply endeavours to collect the facts and base some probable conclusions upon them. It is worth noting, moreover, that some of the greatest Biblical critics have been men of deep Christian convictions, with a profound faith in the Divine character of the Christian Bible. We may take as an instance the late Professor Robertson Smith, who was the pioneer in Great Britain of Biblical criticism, and who lost his chair because of his critical views. Here is his answer to the question, why he accepted the Bible as inspired of God: "Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming Love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us in Him His will for our salvation; and this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul." [1]

[1] Quoted in Miss A. W. Richardson's pamphlet, *Criticism and Inspiration*, p. 8.

And what has been the result for Christian thought of all this new study of the Bible? Perhaps the chief result has been to compel us to modify the traditional theory of the meaning of inspiration. All who hold the faith of Christ, whether critics or not, are agreed on the fact of the inspiration of the Bible; the only question is as to what exactly we mean by calling it inspired. In this connection it is well to remember that the Bible itself gives us no definition of its own inspiration. This being the case, one would suppose that the only satisfactory way to arrive at the meaning of inspiration would be carefully and patiently to examine the inspired books. But, until recently, this is exactly what has not been done. Men started with the preconceived notion that inspiration must entail a supernatural freedom from any possibility of error, however slight. Hence the theory of "verbal inspiration"; hence the idea that the Bible's several books were the immediate work of the Holy Spirit, the human author acting, so to say, as a mere penholder. But a fresh study of these books has, for a large number of thoughtful people, rendered this view untenable. We are obliged to recognize that, in these inspired books, there is a genuinely human element present. The facts before us would seem to show clearly that when God "inspires" a man with a message for his fellow-men, He does not suppress his individuality, nor neutralize his human infirmities, nor confer on him a miraculous immunity from the possibility of error. On the contrary, He would appear to use the man's personality, *with its imper-*

fections, as the instrument by which to accomplish His purposes. The man is not as a piece of lifeless mechanism; but through his living human brain, hot from his heart, and over his human lips, passes forth the Word of God that has burnt itself upon his deepest consciousness.

The gain from this view is unquestionable. It enables us to distinguish between the Divine message itself and the vehicle in which it comes; to separate the fact of the Revelation from its form. It is not too much to say that such a distinction is indispensable to any satisfactory understanding of the meaning of the Old Testament. The Old Testament thus viewed ceases to be a compendium of ready-made and final truth; it shows itself as a record of a progressive revelation, gradually unfolded by God and gradually apprehended by man. The "difficulties" of the Old Testament, regarded from this standpoint, disappear as by magic. For instance, the oft-debated question as to whether or not the first chapter of Genesis is scientifically correct appears, on this view, as much ado about nothing. Any question of scientific or historical accuracy belongs to the human factor of which we have spoken above, and is therefore powerless to invalidate the religious or spiritual truth involved. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that the writer of the first chapter of Genesis believed, as he apparently did, that the earth was created before the sun, still that belief of his affects not at all his sublime message of God's absolute sovereignty in creation—"in the beginning *GOD*." And it is the same with other "difficulties."

We are no longer obliged to try to reconcile every supposed discrepancy. We can now see that the immoralities and barbarities and imprecations which shock us belong to a lower stage of religious history.[1] "We can look away from details to the great central truths which were being slowly taught to an unwilling nation, to the great Divine purpose for the world which was being patiently wrought out in and through the vicissitudes of the nation's history and the sufferings and triumphs of its individual members."[2] Altogether we stand to gain and not to lose. Criticism is throwing new light on the unique religious value of the Old Testament, and is providing us with an ever-broadening base for our belief that it is the Word of God.

[1] It is not always realized that this task of discrimination is a task handed down to us by the New Testament itself. For instance, there were portions of the Law that Christ completely reversed; other portions He interpreted afresh, or declared to have been purely temporary (see Matt. v. *passim*). Similarly with His Apostles. They raise for us the question of the Canon, for we find them quoting from what the Church now regards as extra-canonical books (*e. g.* Jude 9, 14), in a manner indistinguishable from their mode of quoting the Old Testament. And they raise the question of interpretation, importing a new and purely metaphorical meaning into the original words (*e. g.* 1 Cor. ix. 9, quoting from Deut. xxv. 4).

Henry Drummond's biographer, Professor George Adam Smith, records the significant fact that, out of the multitude of men and women who sought Drummond's spiritual help, a large number confessed to having lost their faith through the pressure of difficulties about the Old Testament. See G. A. Smith, *Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament*, p. 27. The whole book deserves to be read and studied.

[2] Professor Kirkpatrick, in *The Higher Criticism* (three Papers by S. R. Driver, D.D., and A. F. Kirkpatrick, D.D.), p. 13.

With regard to the New Testament, the gain from modern criticism may truly be called incalculable. The prodigious labour expended during the last half-century on a minute analysis of the chief documents of our faith has not been in vain. The battle round the records has been stern and prolonged, but now that the smoke is clearing away we are beginning to see the results. And the main result is a new and welcome certainty that those records are substantially *true*. "Slowly but surely the dates of the material documents have been pushed back, until less and less room has remained for the growth of legend. Correspondingly the conviction has strengthened that, whatever is to be decided as to the discrepancies in the Gospel records, we can have no doubt that they do present us with an accurate and trustworthy picture of the historical position as a whole." [1] Or we may take the opinion of such a competent and unprejudiced witness as the late G. J. Romanes, scientist and thinker: "The outcome of the great battle (round the documents)," he says, "is impartially considered a signal victory for Christianity." [2]

This minute examination of the records, and consequent re-assurance of their trustworthiness, has led directly to another result, the importance of which cannot be exaggerated, and that is the recovery of the historical Christ. The vast resources of scholarship and archæology have succeeded in re-shaping the stage, they have recovered for us the atmosphere, the background, the perspective. And,

[1] A. W. Robinson, D.D., *Are We Making Progress?* p. 21.

[2] G. J. Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 155.

more than all, by their help we are enabled to see as never before the form and fashion of the Figure Who is moving in the midst. It is no exaggeration to say that we to-day stand face to face with the Christ as no generation has stood since the first. He is, to us, not a figment of imagination, nor an abstraction of theology, but a real and living Person. "The historic Personality of Jesus," says Professor Cairns, "has risen upon the consciousness of the Church with the force almost of a new revelation, the ultimate results of which still lie far in the future." [1]

III. The third question which bothers some people has to do with the new, but extraordinarily important, science of psychology. Can the Christian, in view of the investigations of modern psychology, be quite sure that there is no element of self-delusion in his spiritual experiences? The concluding pages of this chapter will only try to indicate an answer to this question, without attempting anything in the nature of a general review of the relations of psychology and religion.

It has been quite inevitable that psychology should push its investigations right into the field of religious experience. Religion at first escaped, merely because scientists—or many scientists—loftily dismissed it as belonging to the region of delusion, and therefore unworthy of scientific investigation. But that attitude has passed away. Most thinkers are now agreed that religion has its facts just as much as any other realm of human experience, and the old divorce between scientific facts and religious facts

[1] Cairns, *Christianity in the Modern World*, p. 14.

has lost its justification. The result has been a new and tremendous impetus for the scientific study of religious phenomena, and in particular the rise of what is known as physiological psychology, which is the scientific term describing the endeavour to trace the mysterious but real connection between a man's mental and his physical states, the relation between thought itself and the physical factors which condition it. With infinite skill and patience, investigators have applied the microscope and dissecting knife of psychology to large areas of the field of religious experience; they have minutely examined the physical and psychical conditions of many of the common Christian phenomena, such as conviction of sin, conversion, assurance of peace, saintliness and the like.

And what, so far, has been the result of all this investigation? It is to be feared that one result at any rate has been the production of real perplexity in many a devout mind. Perhaps the crux of the difficulty may be stated thus: Does not this recent investigation tend to show that Christian experience can be accounted for largely on physical grounds? The Christian asserts that he holds communion with a personal God. Does not psychology, while admitting that something happens, nevertheless explain that happening by the physical and mental conditions with which it is inextricably bound up? There is no doubt that the writings of some psychologists give some colour to this fear. It is possible to find men who will seriously assert that conversion is nothing more than an ordinary phenomenon attaching to the crisis of puberty and

adolescence; or that religion in general is a mere survival of a primitive instinct, or a transient state or condition in the evolution of the human mind. But suchlike assumptions (for they are nothing more) should not be confused with the assured results of cautious psychological investigation. In truth, a reasonable psychology is more friend than foe to the Christian faith. For we may appositely apply here the same great principle which, as we saw above, is the rock on which the materialist case splits, the principle that to describe a process does not necessarily explain its cause. Indeed, when in psychological research we attempt to find the cause and meaning of the whole phenomenon in the attendant physical and psychical conditions, we rapidly find ourselves in the region of absurdities. What Professor William James—a pioneer in the new psychology—said about such "medical materialism" is still worth quoting to-day. "Medical materialism," he scornfully remarks, "finishes up St. Paul by calling his vision on the road to Damascus a discharging lesion of the occipital cortex, he being an epileptic. It snuffs out Saint Teresa as an hysteric, Saint Francis of Assisi as a hereditary degenerate. George Fox's discontent with the shams of his age, and his pining for spiritual veracity, it treats as a symptom of a disordered colon."[1] And then he proceeds neatly to turn the tables on the "medical materialists" by means of their own weapons. "According to (one of) the general postulates of psychology, there is not a single one

[1] Compare theories noted by James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 10 f., 499 f.

of our states of mind, high or low, healthy or morbid, that has not some organic process as its condition. Scientific theories are organically conditioned just as much as religious emotions are, and if we only knew the facts intimately enough, we should doubtless see 'the liver' determining the dicta of the sturdy atheist as decisively as it does those of the Methodist under conviction anxious about his soul." [1]

It can confidently be affirmed that the general trend of psychology is to establish the reality of religious experience. It is no function of the psychologist to pronounce on the nature of the objective Power or Person with which the man believes himself to be in communication. But psychology can, and does, say that that experience is a *real* experience and no delusion, and that it possesses a definite spiritual value. It is inevitable —indeed it is right—that this new science should make every effort to lay bare the hidden psychic and physical factors at work in the religion of the individual soul. But it is a profound mistake to regard this analytical process as necessarily impugning the ultimate spiritual value of the thing analyzed. And, however the process may be explained, there is, in countless instances, no doubt at all as to the far-reaching practical effects of the mysterious inner happenings. To quote Professor James again: "The unseen region is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in this world. When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality, for we are turned into new men,

[1] James, *op. cit.*, pp. 13, 14.

and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change. But that which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal." [1]

Further than this, neither he nor any other psychologist, *as such*, can go. The student who would view all the factors in the spiritual experience of the Christian must, for the remaining elements, turn to historic fact, with which psychology has no direct concern. But I am inclined to think that the psychologist and the historian between them would, on an impartial survey, admit not only the value but the *truth* of Christian experience. Let us put it in this way. Take a good specimen of a professed Christian. Here we have, as the psychologist would admit, a very real effect going on, in character and in life, whatever technical descriptions he might give of the attendant intellectual or emotional conditions. Now turn to history. There we find—and historians support us—that there once appeared a Man, Who said that He was the Son of God, and therefore through the centuries would continue living and accessible to men, and Who promised that communion with Himself should produce just such effects on life and character as our Christian is displaying. Again we look at history, past and present, and we find that our Christian is no isolated specimen, but that countless numbers have manifested and are manifesting these effects, and all attribute them to the one

[1] James, *op. cit.*, p. 516.

Cause. Of course it is just conceivable that all are victims of a universal delusion, and that the historic event did not happen as asserted. But if in a general way the reality of contact with the unseen world is granted, as we have seen that many psychologists do grant it, and if even the bare minimum of Christianity's historic facts are true, then assuredly we are right in affirming that the Christian's spiritual experience of communion with God in Christ is a thing absolutely and fundamentally *real*.

In this connection it is worth noting that some religious thinkers are on dangerous ground in their tendency to divorce the Christ of history from the Christ of experience. It matters little or nothing, say they, if a thing is historically true provided it is ideally true. They think thus to render themselves immune from attack from the side of historical criticism. But if they so blithely surrender the one citadel, they are like to find the other go too, whether they will or no. For the Christian, objective historical fact and inner spiritual experience are, as we have just seen, bound up together, and in their union lies their strength. To cut our communications and meet the hostile psychologist away from the base of history is a foolhardy operation and one that is likely to end in disaster.

CHAPTER X

THE SINGLE HEART AND THE OPEN MIND

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"*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart . . . and with all thy mind.*"—Matt. xxii. 37.

"The being who has intellect does not love perfectly unless his intellect takes part in his loving."—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

"When the procession of your powers goes up joyfully singing to worship in the temple, do not leave the noblest of them all behind to cook the dinner and to tend the house. . . . Insist on seeing all that you can see now through the glass darkly, so that hereafter you may be ready when the time for seeing face to face shall come."—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

MOST personalities are a sum total of more or less varied characteristics. The combination of these characteristics may result in inconsistency, or, if unified under a controlling will, it may make for strength of character. It is with the particular combination indicated in the title to this chapter that it is my purpose to deal.

It is fairly obvious that, if a Christian man is to be "complete and perfectly equipped for every good work,"[1] he should combine a single heart with an open mind (using the term "open mind" in the broad sense of reasoning activity). But as a matter of fact the combination is none too common. Too often the clever man is all brains without zeal, the enthusiast all zeal without brains.

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 17.

The theologian has little evangelism, the evangelist little theology. One man is always testing his creed with an open mind, and barely attains conviction. The other man has plenty of convictions, but regards it as a species of sacrilege to examine the foundations on which they are built. Meanwhile the hungry at heart are left outside, unsatisfied. They fall between two stools. They go to the first man and find no faith, to the other and find no reason. The one offers them something quite unsubstantial; the other produces that which they cannot possibly swallow. Where are they to turn? This query hinges on the prior question, Is this alternative inevitable? Must there be this divorce between faith and reason? Is it impossible for the single heart and the open mind to dwell together in unity? It is an old question, but it needs facing afresh in every generation.

Let us, quite briefly, note what these facts are. In the first place, as we saw in the previous chapter, human thought has, since the beginning of the last century, climbed to an entirely new point of outlook. There can be no going back to the lower ground, and ignoring the new horizon that has come into view. Things have been brought within our vision that were completely hidden from the eyes of our forefathers. In Science, in Philosophy, in the critical study of History, new methods have been devised, and astounding results have been achieved. The fanciful speculations of former days have given way to a wholly new appreciation of, even reverence for, *facts*. Moreover, there has

been a growing obliteration of the sharp dividing lines which used to be drawn round each separate department of study. "There is no feature of the last half-century more characteristic than the way in which all departments of knowledge are becoming an organic unity." [1]

This advance in thought has, as we have seen, inevitably affected our view of the Bible, and our attitude towards the fundamentals of our faith. No good is to be gained by frantic efforts to enclose the Faith, and wall it in from the blustering winds of free inquiry. Whether we like it or not, our faith and the new thought must meet, and it will be wiser in the end to work for their reconciliation than take for granted their enmity. I speak in the future tense, but, in point of fact, the transition is already proceeding. The minute inquiry into the nature and composition of the books of the Bible has compelled us to remodel our theory of inspiration. We believe, indeed, with firmer conviction than ever, that the Bible is the Word of God; but we are learning to regard its several writers, not as mechanical instruments for the Divine Hand, but as living human witnesses to their Divine Message.

On the New Testament especially the searchlight of criticism has been poured. Line by line the Gospels have been sifted, as men have attacked with ever-increasing zest the ever fresh problem of the personality of Jesus of Nazareth. Nothing escapes the modern passion for investigation. Psychology is patiently and steadily analyzing the

[1] Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*, vol. ii. p. 270.

whole field of religious experience. Physical Science, with her insistence on Natural Law, is compelling us to examine afresh the meaning of miracle. Prompted by Science, Theology has rediscovered the truth of the Immanence of God. And, to cite one more instance, the science of comparative religion is obliging us to re-state the meaning and the motive of the missionary enterprise. As we take the Gospel to the heathen, it is dawning on our minds to-day that Christ "came not to destroy but to fulfil."

Here, then, is one set of facts, facts that it will be fatal to ignore; facts so important, so insistent, that they seem to be calling for a whole new army of Christian thinkers. But they are not the only facts, and thinkers are not the only men that are needed. Indeed, as one looks out upon the world, it appears to be apostles and prophets who are needed most of all. The world wants driving convictions more than considered opinions. "Truth becomes effective by being felt to be truth. Stated in accurate form it has a very neat appearance, and is convenient for reference and consultation, but there is no inward necessity that we should do anything about it. Not until some one feels that something is true does that something go out with effective power into the world." [1]

If ever the world was in desperate need of Christ, it is in this our own century, the twentieth since He first came. If ever there was a call for unhesitating, unwavering devotion on the part of those who

[1] L. N. Clarke, quoted by J. S. Dennis, *The New Horoscope of Missions*, p. 206.

bear His Name, it is in the present age, with its unprecedented opportunities for a great Christian advance. On every side sounds the summons to sacrifice. At last the Church is beginning to realize that the Kingdom will never triumph till those who call Christ Master fling themselves passionately and whole-heartedly into the service of His Cause. It is no time for half-measures. The world needs men so filled with God that through them there shall be an outflowing of the Divine on to the sons of men. "One spiritual man wholly immersed in God would infallibly revolutionize for good England and the world, though indeed it would be by his death." [1] "The deepest need of our age is that we should get back Christ's conception and sense of God. Whenever you have an overmastering sense of God, however inadequately conceived, you have power." [2]

These, then, constitute the two main groups of facts that confront the Christian man as he looks out upon the world to-day. He is made aware both of a new intellectual challenge and of a fresh call to devotion. If we will respond to both, well and good. But too frequently he falls into the snare of giving his exclusive attention to the one and leaving the other out of view. Whenever this happens, loss of spiritual efficiency is the inevitable result. Look for a moment at the consequences of this one-sidedness. Here is a man—genuinely religious as well as mentally proficient—who is impressed with the importance of keeping abreast of modern thought. He becomes increasingly fascinated by the absorbing nature of intellectual

[1] P. N. Waggett. [2] J. H. Oldham.

adventure and discovery. In the course of time he becomes so engrossed in his search as gradually to lose sight of his object. His attention is diverted from the needs of the world and all the practical questions of Christian policy. Finally, perhaps, he drifts into a certain intellectual dilettantism; he is so overtaken by the inertia of open-mindedness that his convictions become flabby and nerveless. He falls a victim to that mental disease so racily described by G. K. Chesterton: "What we suffer from to-day is humility in the wrong place. . . . We are on the road to producing a race too mentally modest to believe in the multiplication table. We are in danger of seeing philosophers who doubt the law of gravity as being a mere fancy of their own." [1] He joins the ranks of those whom Renan describes as mere "spectators of the universe, who cannot alter it if they would, and perhaps would not if they could." As H. C. King has truly remarked, "A fatal facility in taking any point of view, or of defending any proposition, carries with it the danger of breaking down all real conviction." [2] And so when men come to him, as a Christian thinker, for the bread of life, he is regretfully compelled to send them away empty. The influence of Christianity is the communication of life; the man who is busied solely with dry bones and chemical analysis has got nothing living to offer.

On the other hand, there is an almost equal danger of ignoring the intellectual factor. In shunning the one pitfall, men have often fallen into the other. Hence the frequent spectacle of devotion

[1] *Orthodoxy*, p. 54. [2] *Rational Living*, p. 127.

divorced from reason and wedded to intolerance. "There are Christians all about us who fear to bring their minds to bear upon their religion lest their hearts should lose their hold upon it." [1] In the past this has been a grave weakness in certain sections of Prostestant Christianity. It is a weakness partly inherent in the very strength of the Protestant position, with its insistence on the all-sufficiency of faith. Man reaches God by faith alone, and not by a prolonged and arduous intellectual climb. That is perfectly true; but it is an easy step from that position to one that gives reason no part nor lot in the matter, or even (as some extremists have done) abhors it as the devil's own ally. Once let reason in, say they, and there is no room left for mystery. But it is a profound mistake "to identify the mysterious with the irrational. A religion that did not transcend the reach of our unaided reason and demand our faith would be without value to us. But a religion that contradicted reason would be simply incredible." [2] Due to this distrust of reason is the not uncommon case of a man devoted to God and the Kingdom, who mars his usefulness by a rigid intolerance and total inability to appreciate the point of view of those who serve the same Kingdom but cannot share his shibboleths. On every page of Christian history we find a repetition of the same mistake: men confound devotion with intolerance. The confusion is partly due to a genuine uncompromising

[1] Phillips Brooks, Sermon on "The Mind's Love for God," in *Sermons Preached in English Churches*, p. 36.

[2] A. S. Peake, *Christianity: Its Nature and Its Truth*, p. 32.

zeal, partly to the inborn tendency of man to guard the door when once he is safely inside the house. Yet the Incarnation made room for the whole race. Christ flung the obstacles aside and opened wide the door. Shall we hedge it round and guard it, that none may enter in save he who wears our colours and speaks our password? Creed is a privilege to unite, not a test to exclude. "The general Protestant procedure of requiring, as the initial step in the religious life, acceptance of a whole system of doctrines, has been misleading, and has tended distinctly to the deadening of the spiritual life."[1] Christianity is not a sort of Masonic lodge; it is a cathedral that belongs to the whole world, and to which all men have the right of access. Moreover, it is the nemesis of narrow-mindedness that it defeats its own object. Speaking generally, there are no more zealous fishers of men than those who possess a single heart, but are afraid of the open mind. But they hamper their own efforts. They spend herculean labours in squeezing one man through the private portal of their own creation, when they might be shepherding dozens through the wide and public gate into the City of God.

Is there, then, no *via media?* Is there no hope of finding thinkers who are also enthusiastic, enthusiasts who are also thoughtful? To this question it is for our generation to supply the answer. An affirmative answer can be found, and, let us note with thankfulness, is already being put forth. The devoted lives of thousands of thoughtful men and women bear witness that the divorce between faith

[1] H. C. King, *The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life*, p. 92.

and reason, between thought and sacrifice, is unnatural and unnecessary. And further, such a divorce is essentially unscriptural. Christ never spoke of, or treated, man as other than a rational being. In the Bible at least reason is Divine, not satanic. The man of God is called to be "complete"; he is summoned to "present to God all his faculties as an act of reasonable worship."[1] His consecration is one-sided, imperfect, immature, unless it shall include both the single heart and the open mind.

May we, in conclusion, attempt to note more positively what this combination will involve. Let me say here that it is not the man of special gifts whom I have in mind, but the average man endowed with quite ordinary reasoning faculties. On the other hand, while avoiding the dangers of mere intellectualism alluded to above, he will cultivate an alert yet reverent mental outlook. To use a phrase of Bishop Moule's, he will be "an eager observer of all new knowledge, while absolutely at rest in Christ." He will never be afraid to look new facts in the face, nor frightened into hiding his faith in the citadel of the obscurantist. He will be willing to move with the movement of thought, knowing that all true thought must lead not away from but unto Him Who is the Truth. He will realize that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and in that faith will be prepared to find a fresh revelation of God in every advance of human knowledge. Each great scientist, each new philosopher, will appear to him as pioneers exploring

[1] Rom. xii. 1.

their corners of a territory, the whole vast extent of which is the Lord's. More than all, he will set himself with a new zest to inspect and measure and locate the foundations of his faith. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of this task. Each generation in turn, and our own not least, must give a reason for the faith that is in it. The best apostles of the faith are those who know where the foundations lie. The extent and durability of those foundations are disclosed only to those who had delved with their own muscles and seen with their own eyes. Indeed, one of the greatest needs of our own days is more clear thinking among Christians as to what is vital and what is immaterial, what is essential and what is accidental. The most earnest believers are often the most vague and hazy as to the content of their faith. And loose thinking is the parent of intolerance, as well as the despair of those who are asking to be shown a reasonable faith. Convictions to be communicated must be formulated. "The implicit principles of Christian life and worship are principles valid for the intellect. Christ cannot be 'the Way' and 'the Life,' unless He is also 'the Truth.' The decision for Christ is not only a moral but also an intellectual decision." [1] "He who would commend Christianity to our perplexed and distracted age, must himself understand the religion for whose acceptance he pleads." [2]

But hand in hand with this broad sanity of mental outlook must go a resolute, unflinching

[1] Bishop Gore, in a University Sermon.
[2] A. S. Peake, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

devotion. So far from there being any antagonism between the two, the second should be the outcome of the first. The highest devotion will always rest on a reasoned faith. The apostle will do a yet greater work if he is a thinker too. The man who has looked all the facts in the face and emerged at length into the light of a glorious certainty—he is the man who can afford to lay down his life for the Cause. For him sacrifice is no leap in the dark; he *knows* it is infinitely worth while. He has no misgivings that all will turn out to be a dream. Reason is no more a traitorous guide, she is his trusted ally. With her help he has seen the ground of faith, he has found the map of life; joyfully now will he become the servant and guide of those who are still wanderers in the trackless wilderness. With all the faculties that God has given him he has discovered that Christ is real, that Christ is true; therefore with a glad heart and a ready mind will he tread in his Master's steps, and spend himself in his Master's service.

The need of the world is pressing, the golden opportunities are slipping past. If we go about the work of God with mental timidity or qualified enthusiasm, we shall make no impression on our generation. Passionate devotion, joined with a cool and reasoned confidence—here is a two-edged sword that shall smite and win the victory. God send the men to wield it.

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